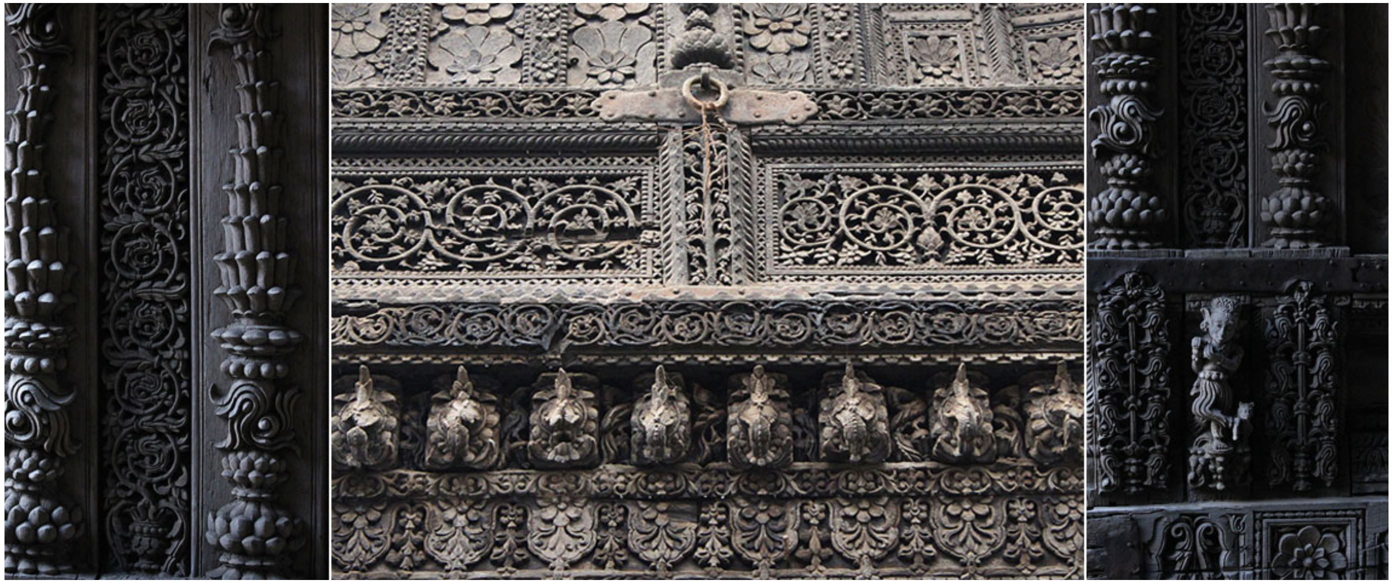
Design Resource

Karnavati: Deep Rooted Legacy of Architecture

Beauty and Intricacy of old Ahmadabad

by
Sunny Kolekar
IDC, IIT Bombay



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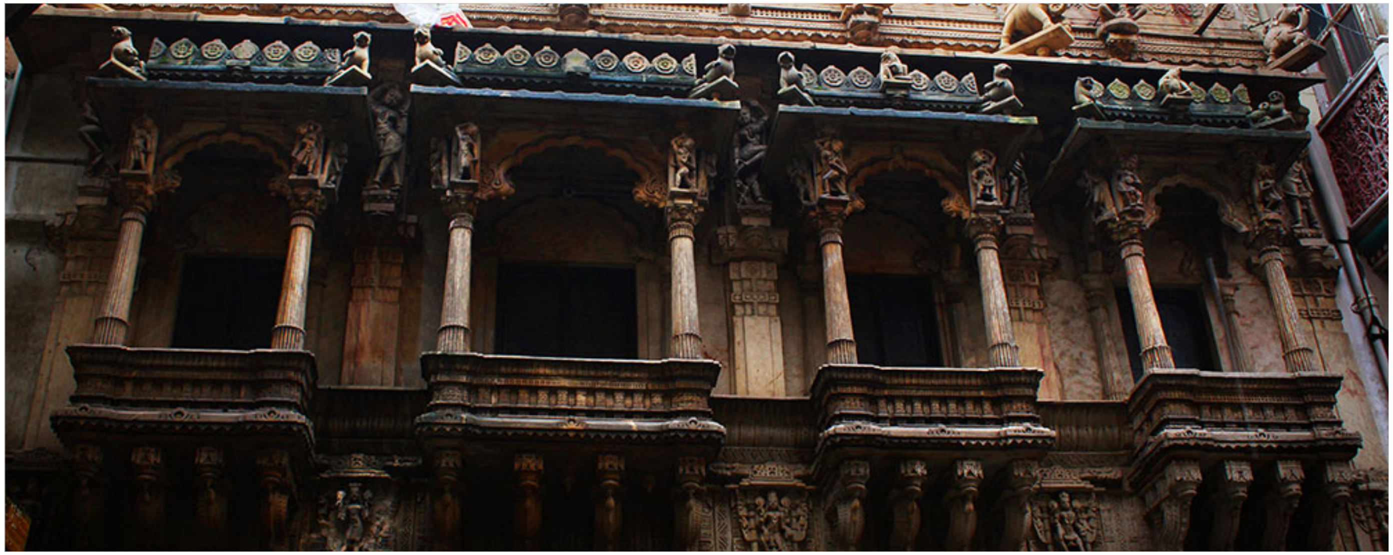
Introduction

Ahmedabad also historically known as Amdavad or Karnavati, is one of the most popular Indian cities in the world and has attracted the special attention of UNESCO situated on the banks of Sabarmati. It is true that during the peak hours of the day, the traffic, the noise, and the dusty air can really get into your veins but at the same time it can be a little overwhelming and it is well worth investing some time to get know the city from the roots and veins. This age-old city can really steal and own your heart with its exquisite and lavish centuries-old architecture. The city has gone through many ruling hands and political as well as socio-economic changes. There is not much information available on what and how was Ahmedabad before the 11th century when it was known as Ahaval or Ashapalli during the regime of Bhil kings. It was in the 11th century the Chalukyas ruler of Anhilwara(Patan) 'Karna' waged a successful war against the Bhil king of Ashaval and later on established his capital city with multiple names like 'Karnavati' 'Shrinagar' and 'Rajanagar'. After the 13th century, it was the time of the Vaghela dynasty which was a very short one but a very stable one. From there Ahmedabad had seen multiple changes, Delhi Sultanate, then Gujarat Sultanate, Mughals, Marathas, Mughal-Maratha, British, Pre- Post Independence. After all such drastic changes, Ahmedabad was shining like a new bloom star and it was in 2001, that nature tried to destroy Ahmedabad. But once again the city proved that it's a phoenix. The captivating and signature elements of Ahmedabad is in the old city where one can witness the age-old habitation system may be a fragment of Indus- valley civilization can be seen. Intricately carved wooden panelling is the traditional technique of rainwater harvesting and conservation. Temples and mosques, museums and architectural monuments reminisce the Victorian era and such innumerable things. Last but not least Ahmedabad got to give a mouth-watering retreat to its visitors.



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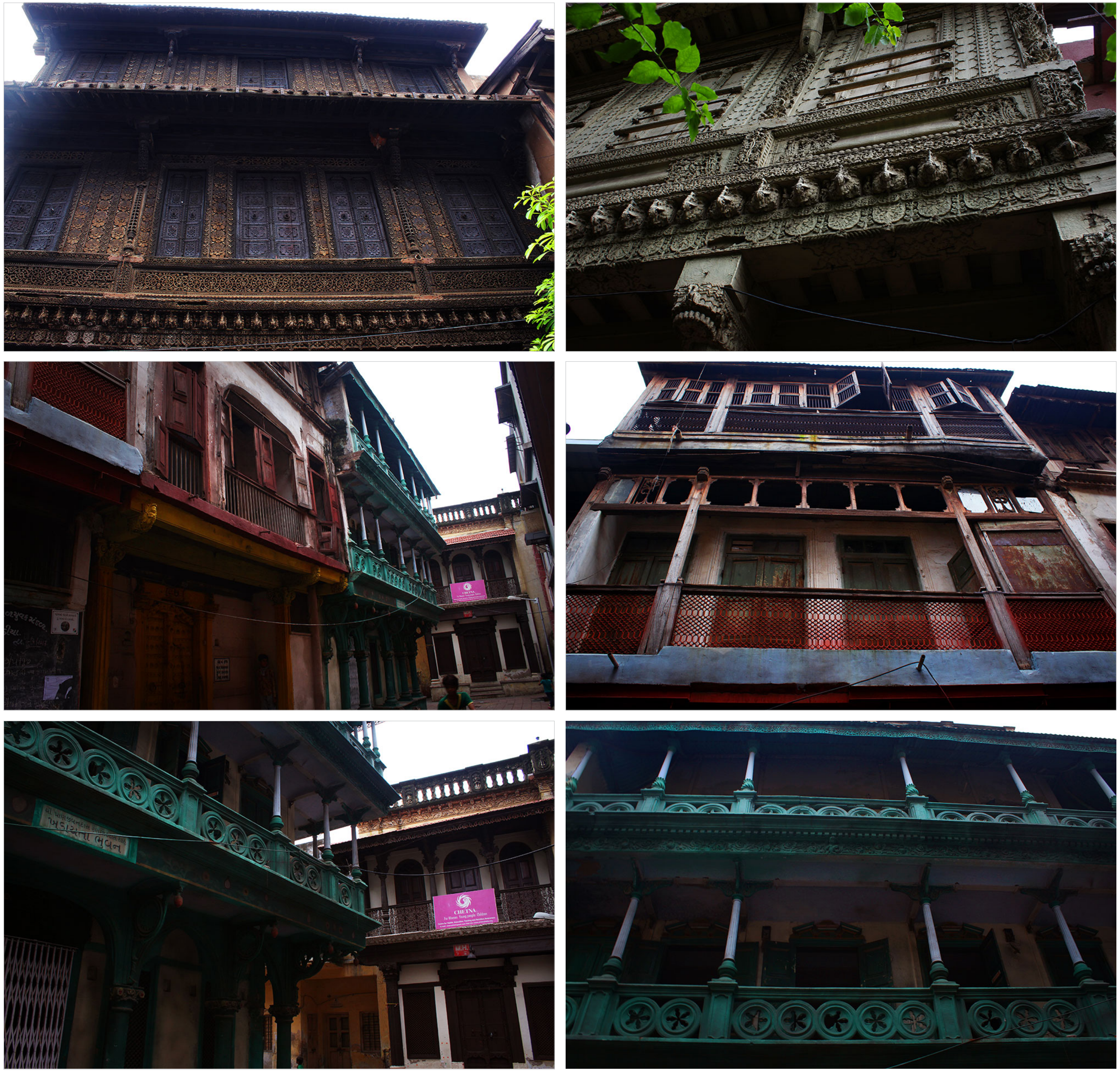

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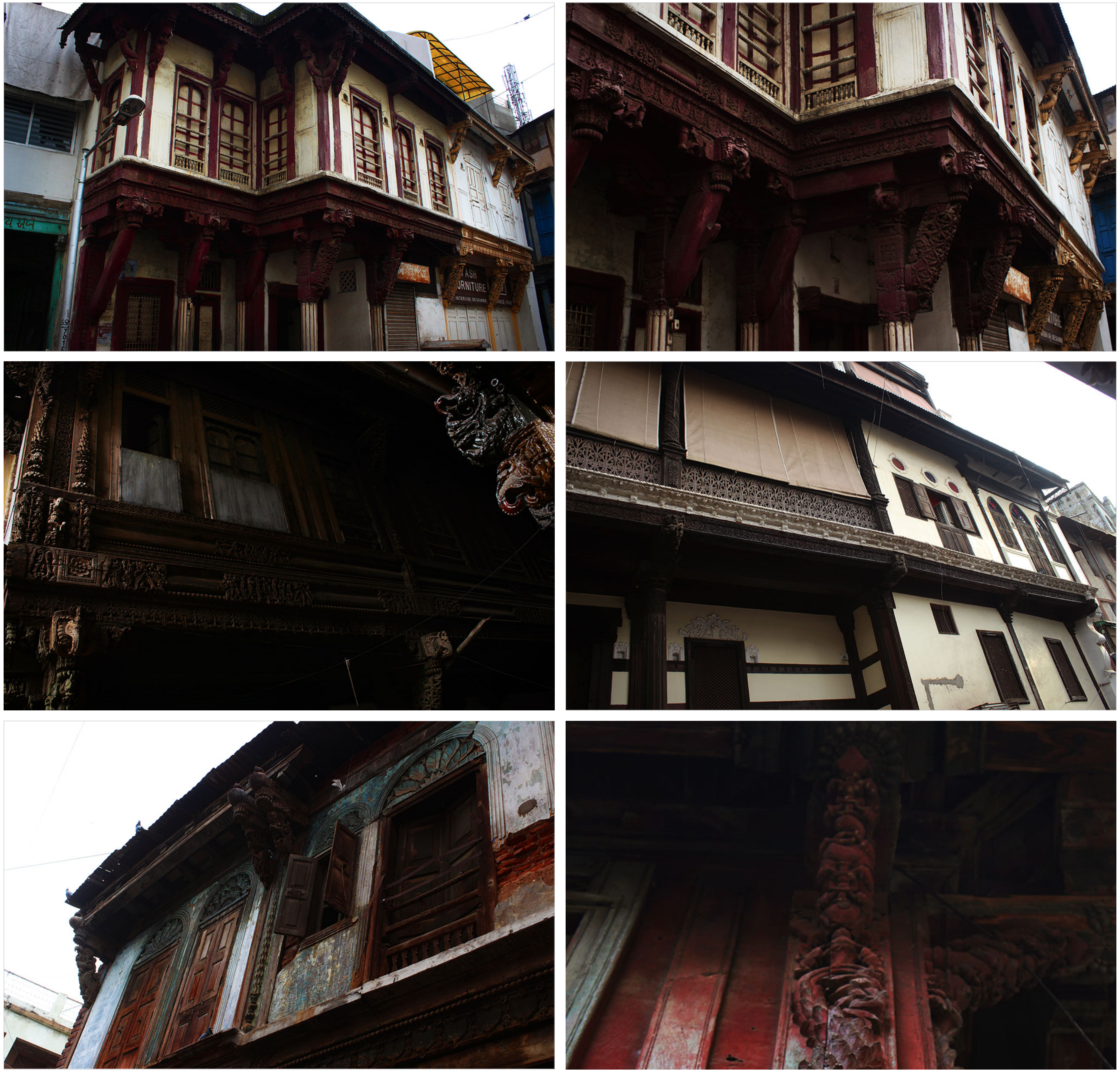

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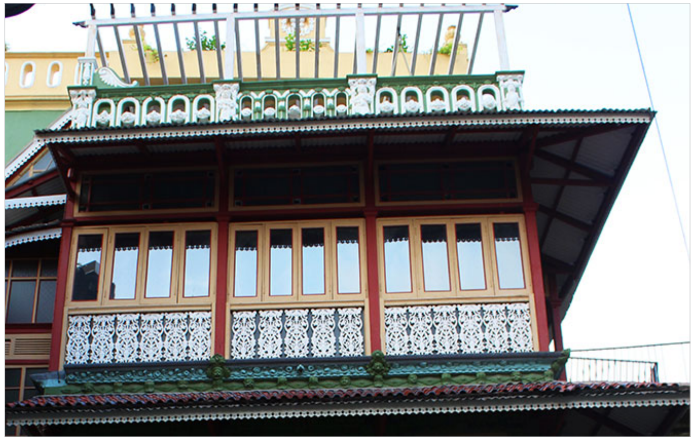

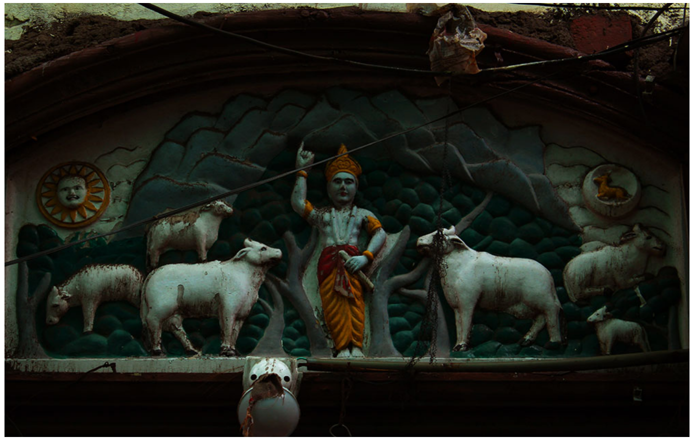

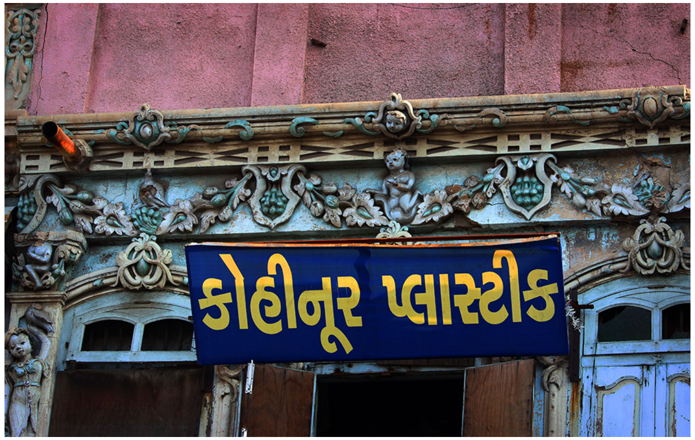

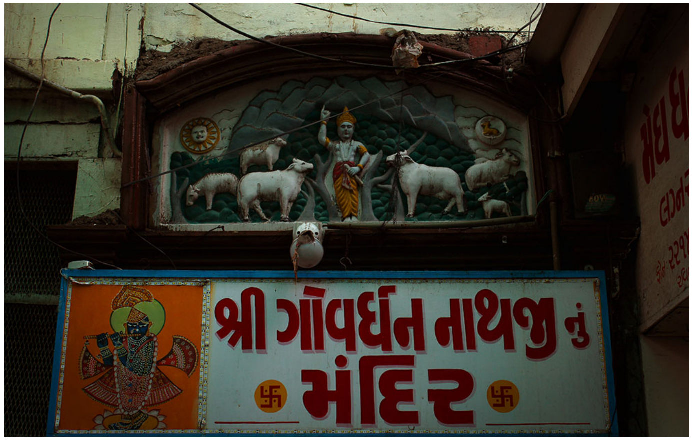
શ્રી ગોવર્ધન નાથજી નું
મંદિર

હરીભાઉ વિશ્વનાથ કું.
વાયોલીન • ગીટાર •
હાર્મોનિયમ • તાનપુરા • બેંજો નવા બનાવનાર
તેમજ રીપેર કરનાર

જુના શેર બજાર
મીઠાઈ ઘર એન્ડ ચવાણા માર્ટ
જુના શેરબજાર વાળા

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Details of Carving

Nakshi: The Exquisiteness of Intricate Wooden Carving

The lanes of old Ahmedabad are having a very organized habitat design called pols. Pol houses are considered as primary housing typology built for more than three hundred years in the old city of Ahmedabad. Ahmadabad has a rich heritage of settlement patterns in its historic old town, the communal riot and the civil disorder of 18th century lead to the construction of pol houses which were organized in dense clusters consisting of two ends which have a single gateway. The residents of each cluster always belong to the same religion not only same religion but also to the same caste, family or same occupation.

So a pol is a combination of many multistory individual houses which form a neighbourhood which has its own urban structure which is self-sufficient for the communities.

The unanimity of each Pol was socially and architecturally homogenous. This indigenous way of living provided territory for interaction, cooperation, and interdependence. This enhanced the formation of a cohesive and self-sustaining community whose physical boundaries were set by the day-to-day interactions of its inhabitants. Some Pols were also places of work, where artisans sold their wares on the thoroughfares outside of the pols.

The most attractive and eye-catchy fact about pol houses is its exquisitely, lavishly and intricately carved wooden panels which are adorning the entrance, wooden pillars, brackets etc. The detailing of each piece of art is exceptional at the same time confusing in its identity. At one glance all appear the same but there are very few slight differences in each figure. The artistry of each piece will give an observer an awestruck, which can easily take to that era and will force to think that how much time must have been spent on each piece to get this perfection, the patient level of those artisans and the impeccable and unimpeachable artistry. In huge houses where there are a lot many intricate ornamentations, a keen observer can sometimes see some unfinished carvings, that can easily lead the thought process to another level. what must have been the reason the artist left it incomplete? One another question that comes to mind will be, how did these carvings are so much similar? It is astonishing that even after these many years, these wood carvings are still alive and young. The changes of sun and moon, the breezy winter and freezing cold nights, the steamy and dusty summer days; nothing, absolutely nothing could ruin them. Even after these many years, there are Havelis which are absolutely abandoned and still in good condition. The architectural style of these Havelis is clearly showing an amalgamation of Mughal-Maratha influence. The intricately carved flora and fauna, mythical characters like yali, the parrots and peacocks, and human figures, all these are creating a royal extravaganza for the visitors.

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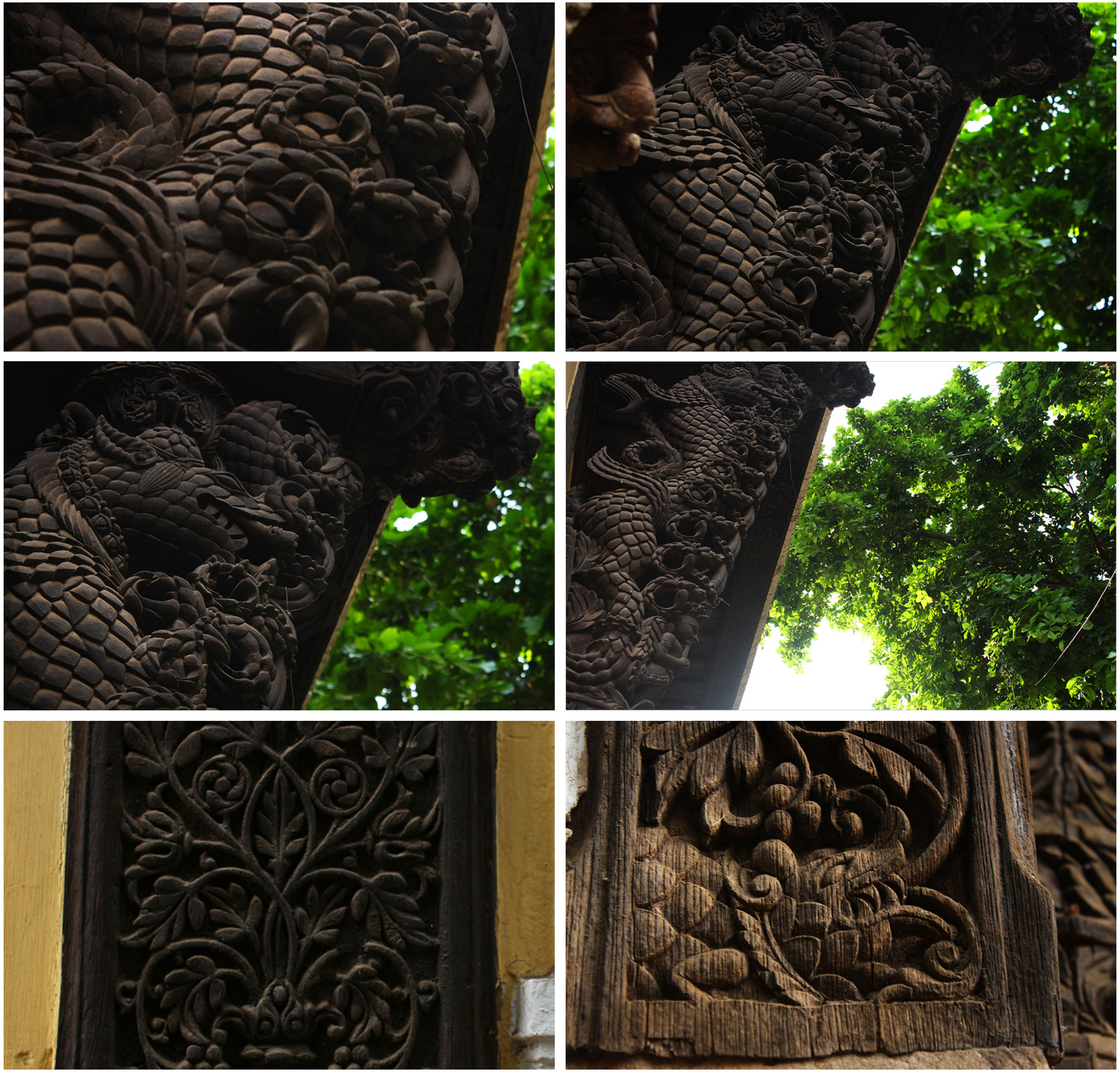

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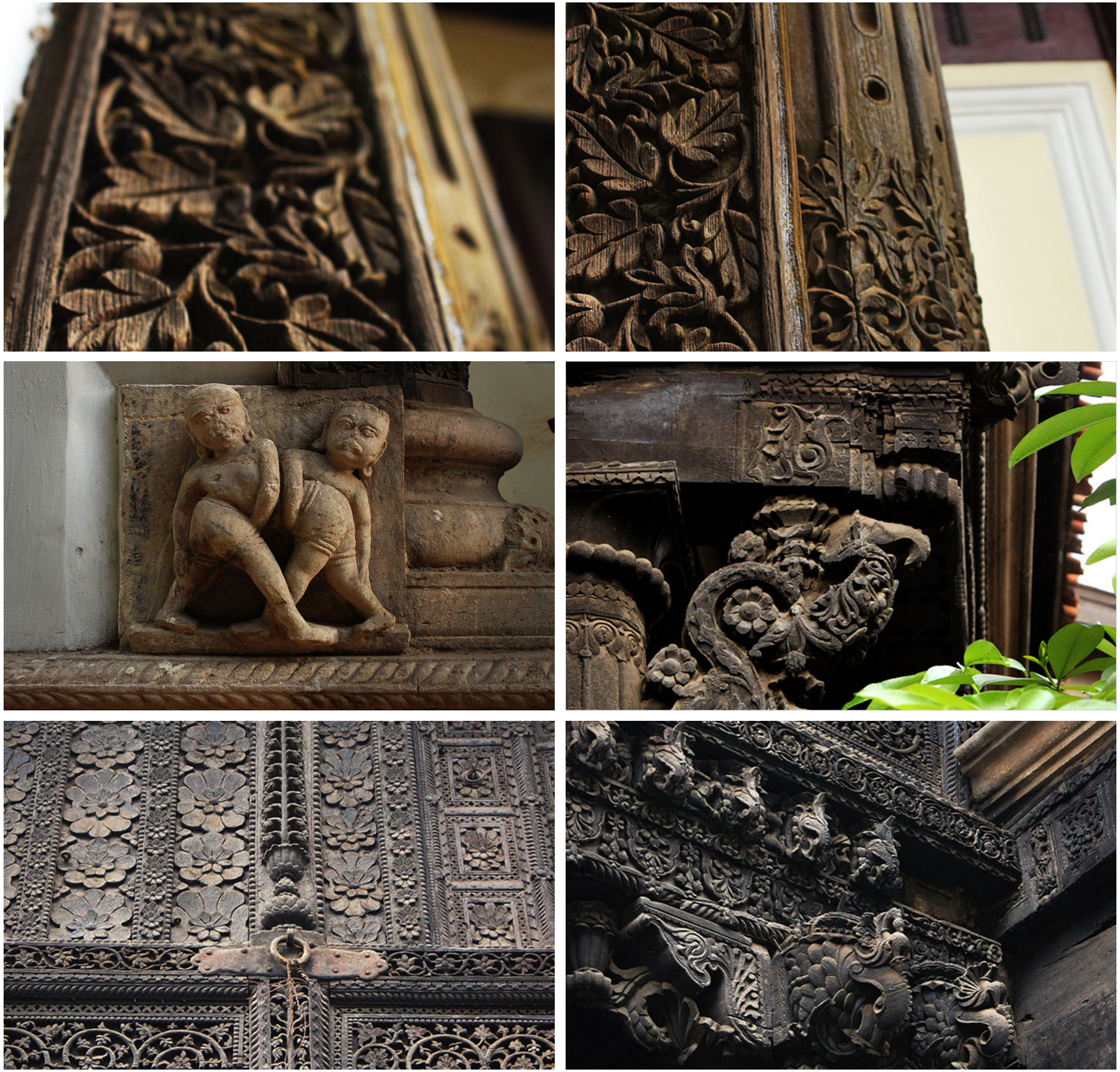

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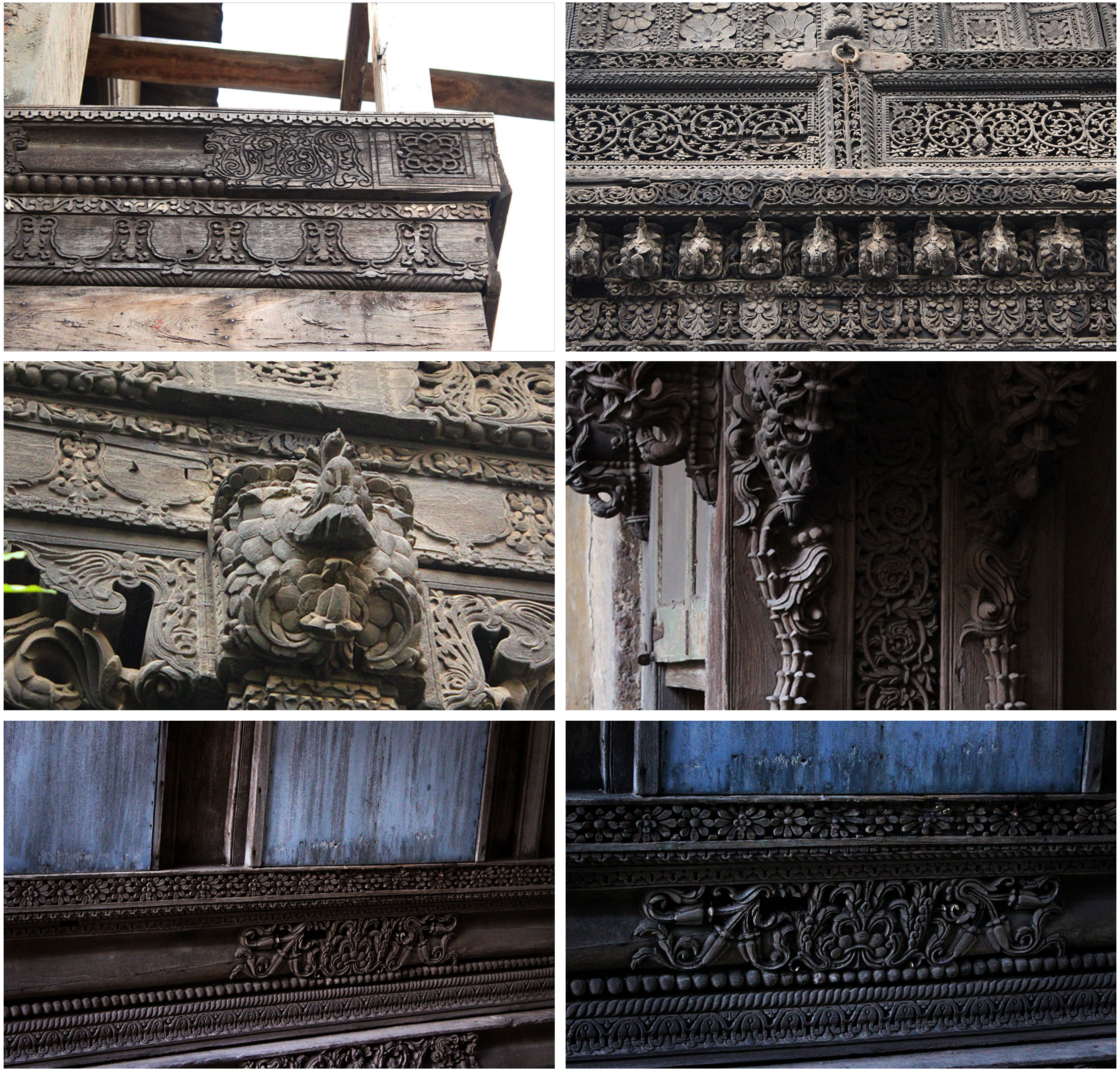

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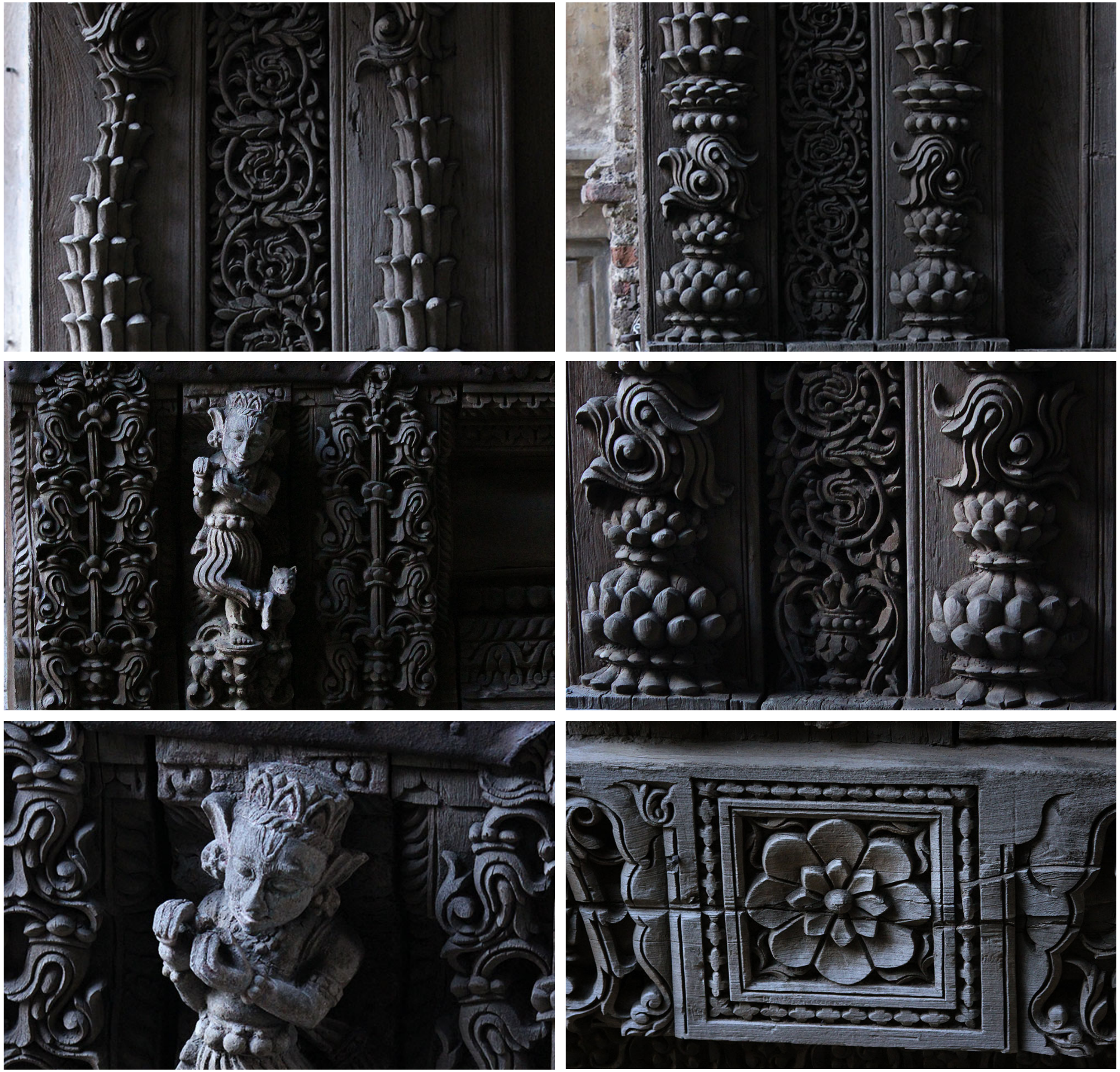

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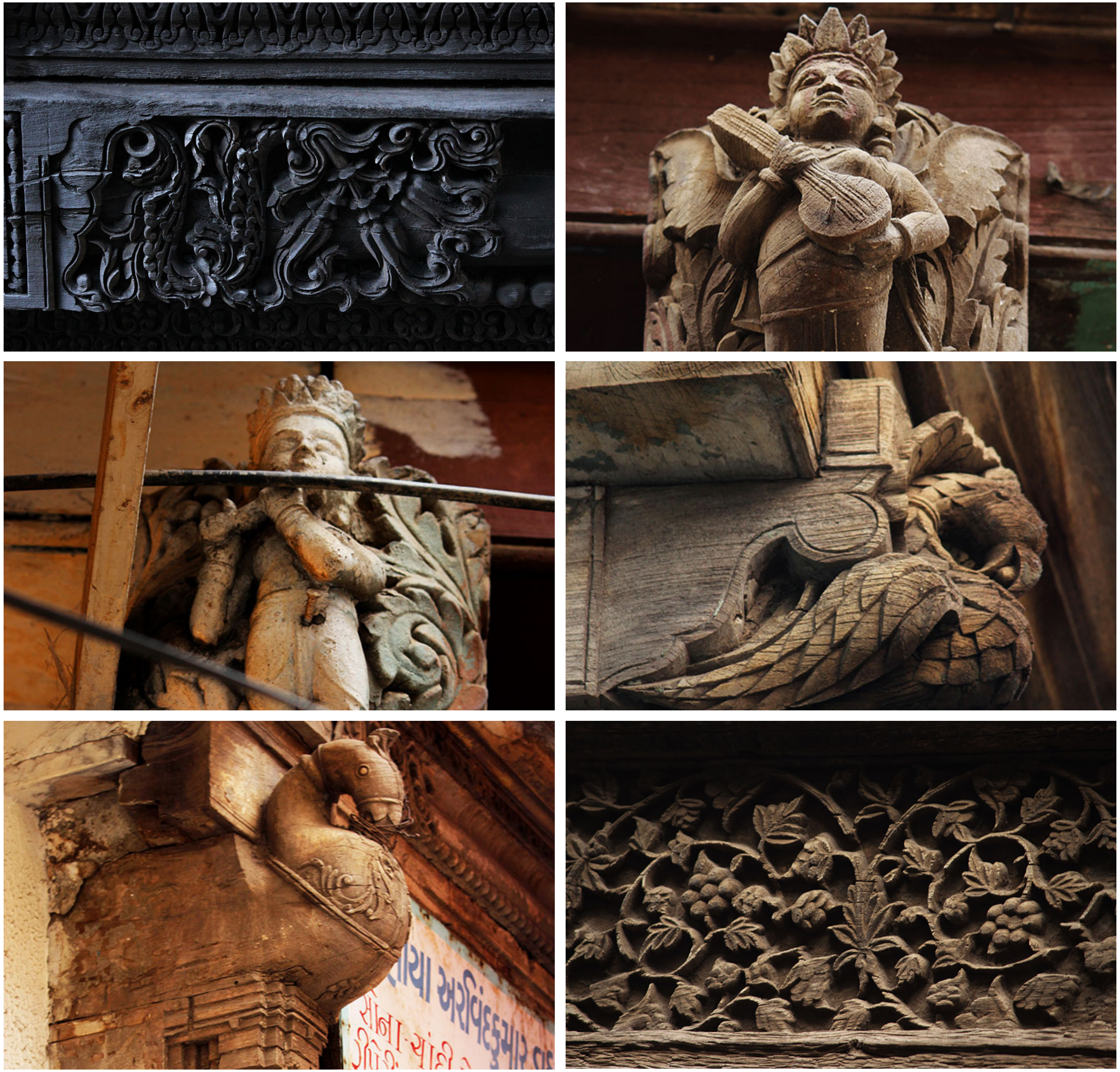

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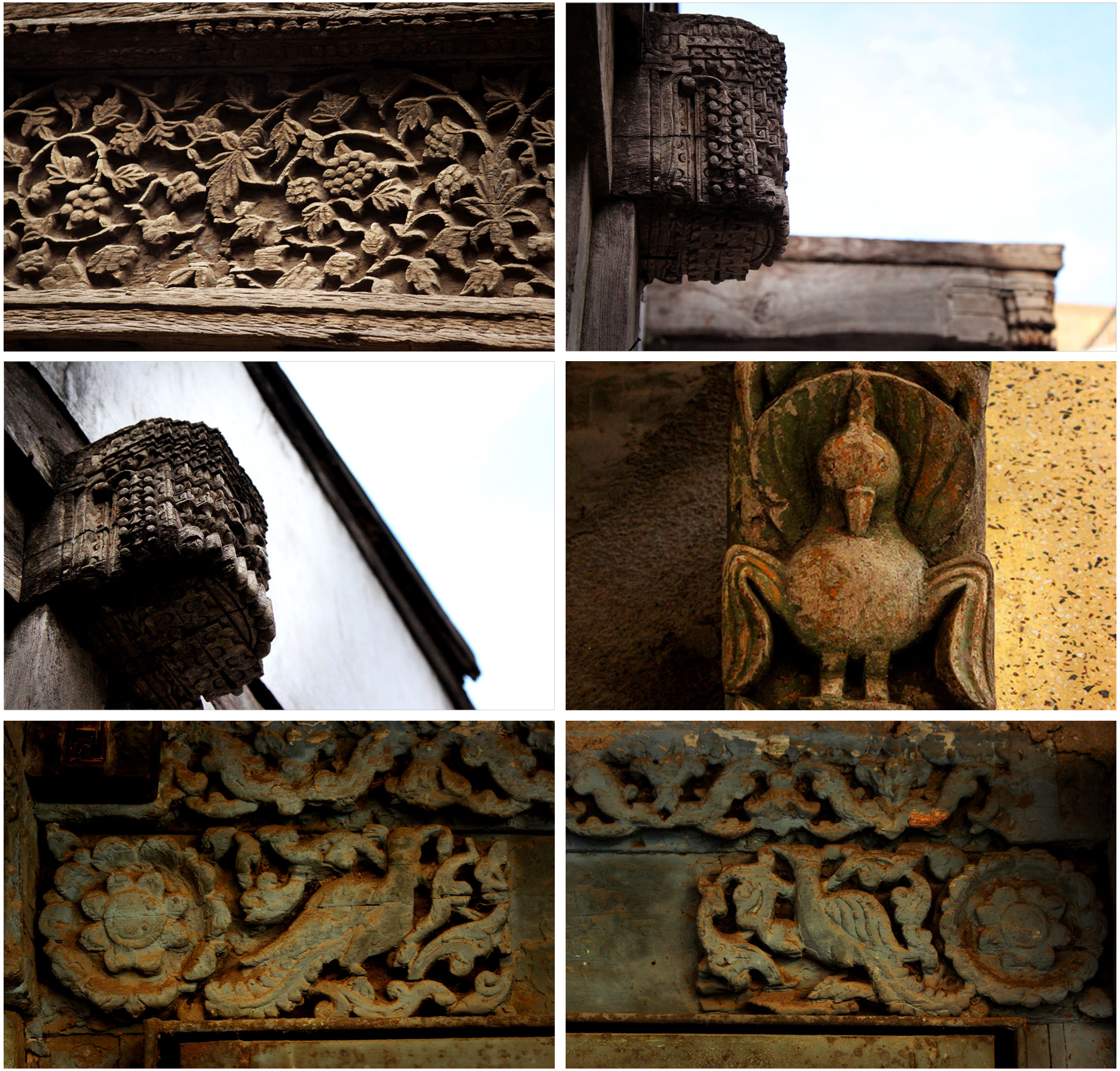

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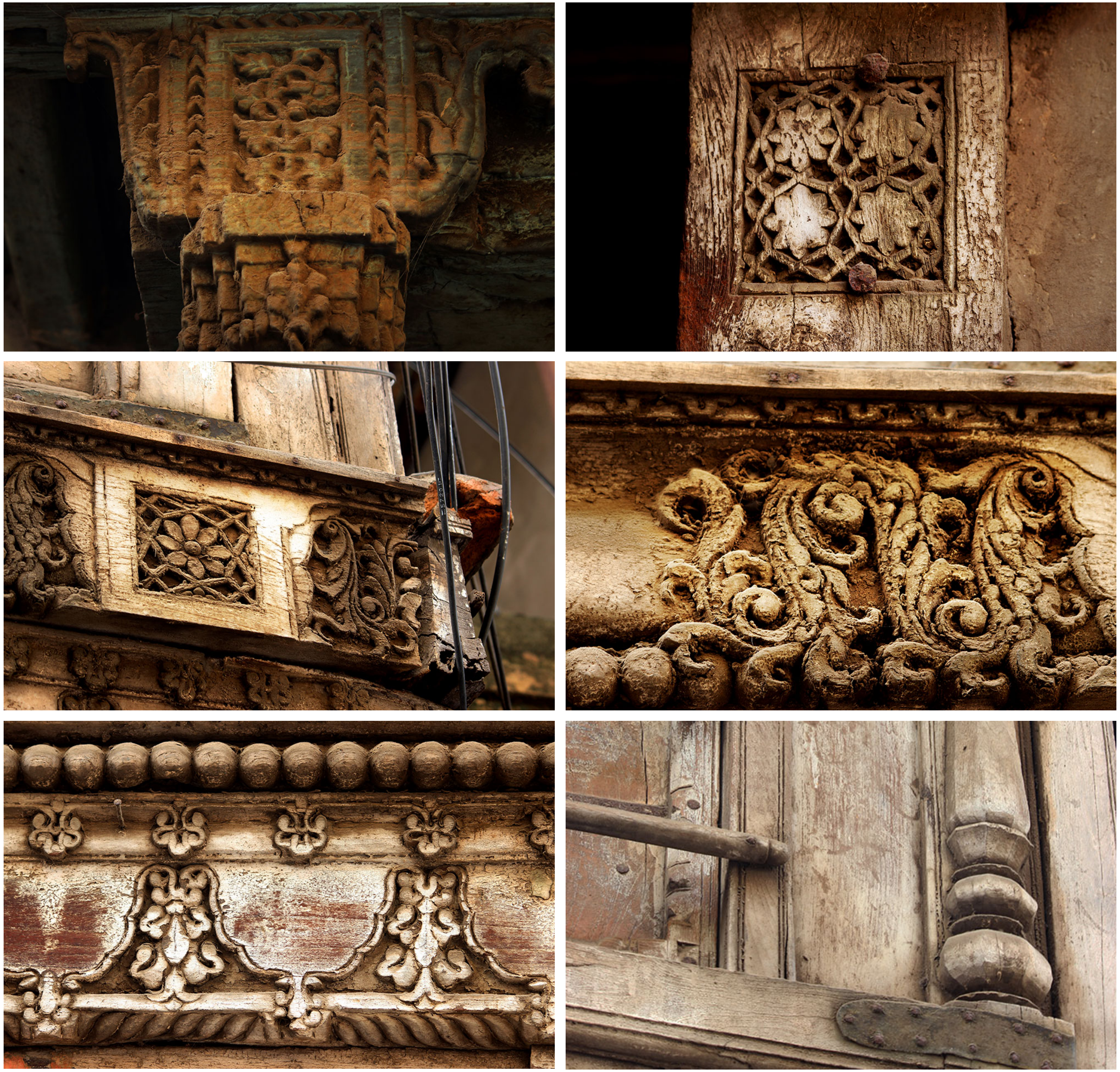

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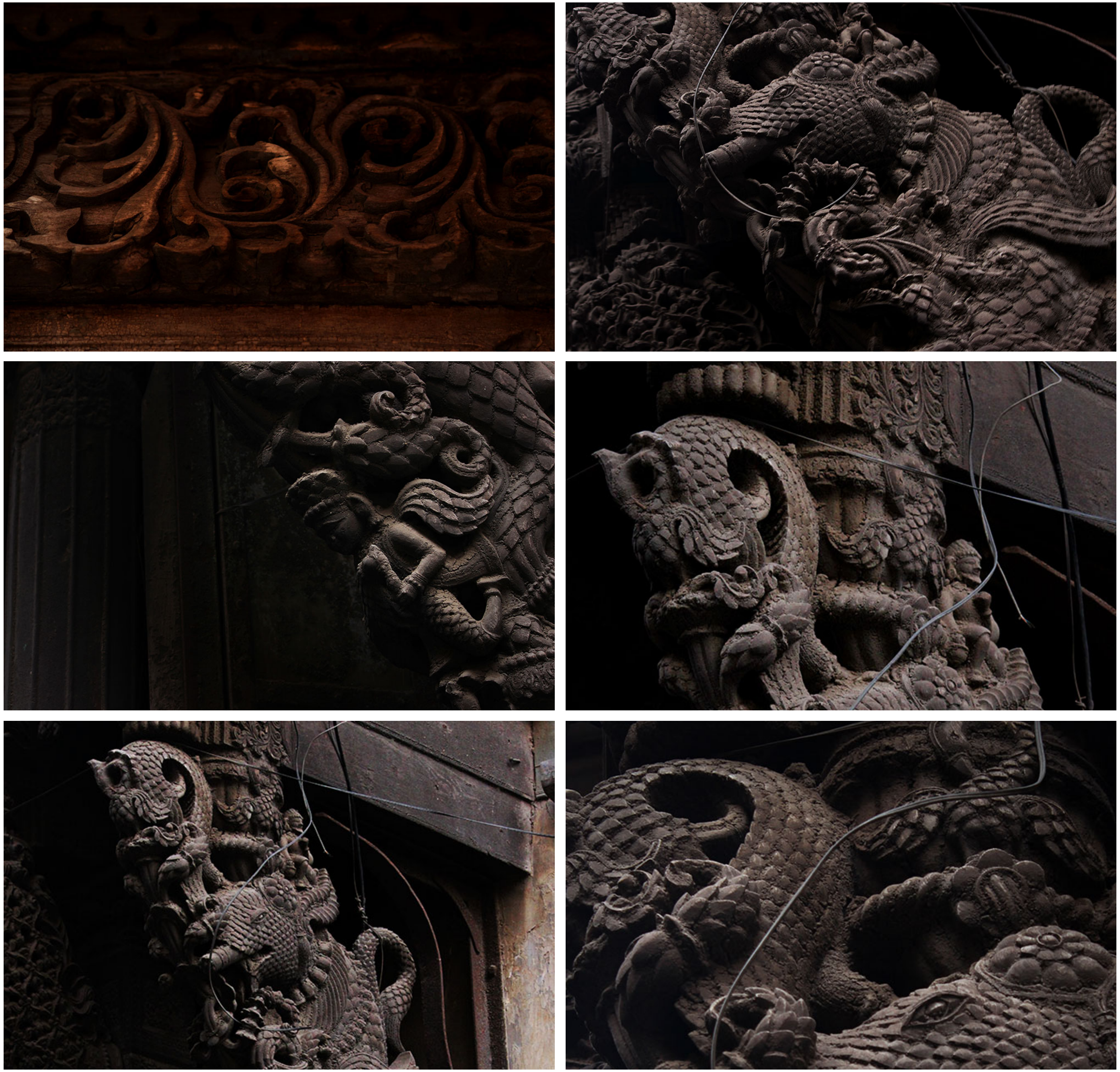

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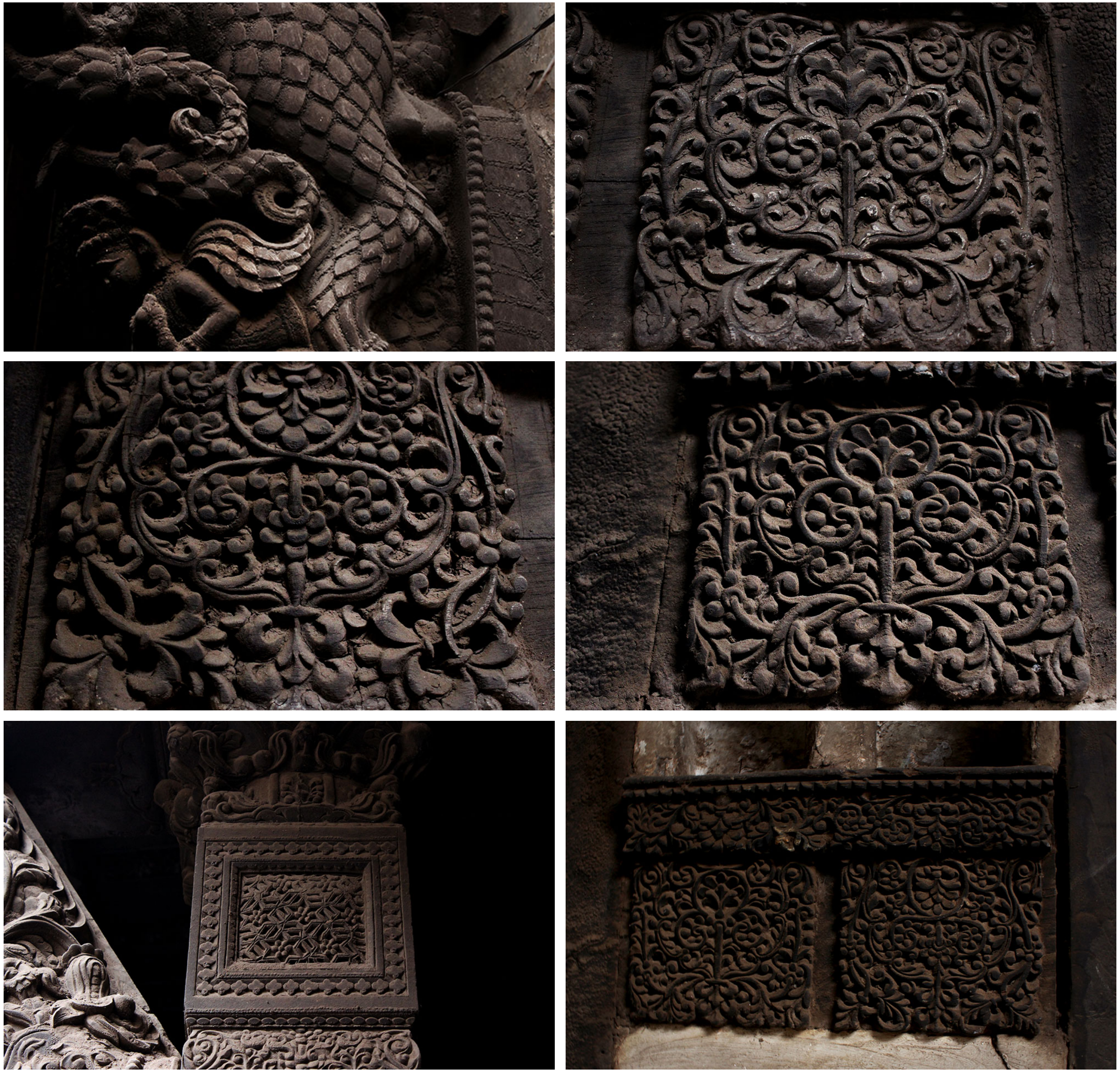

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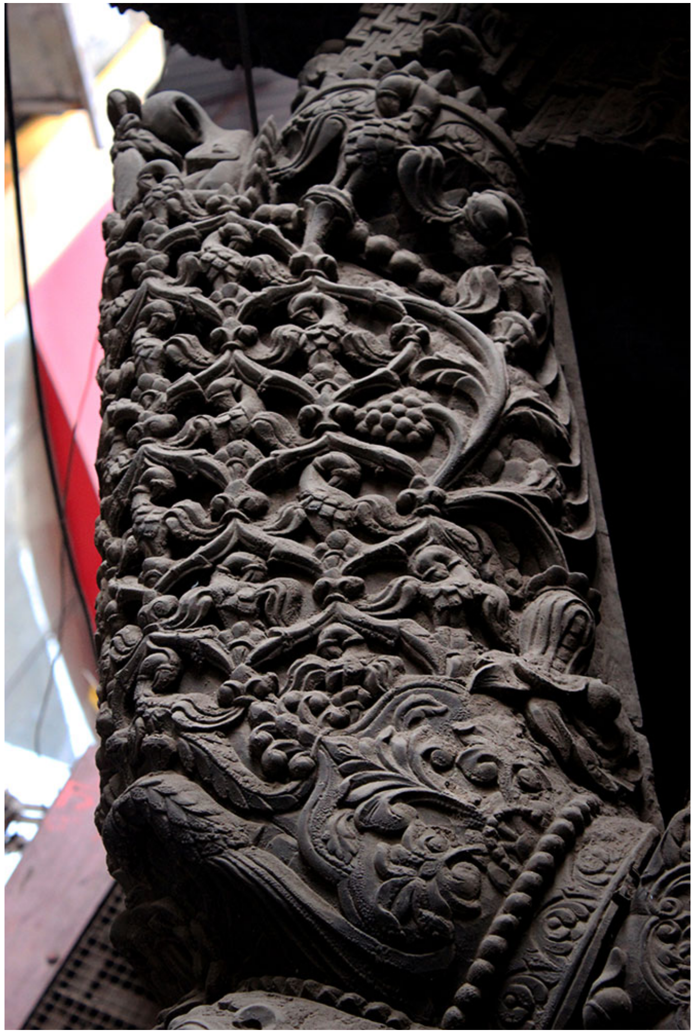

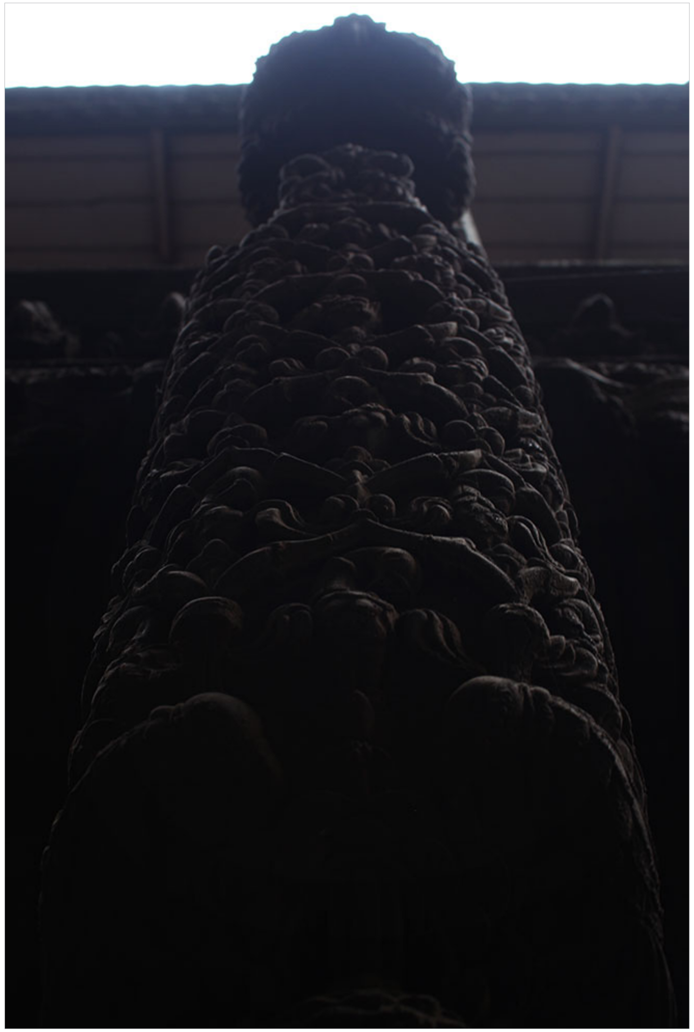

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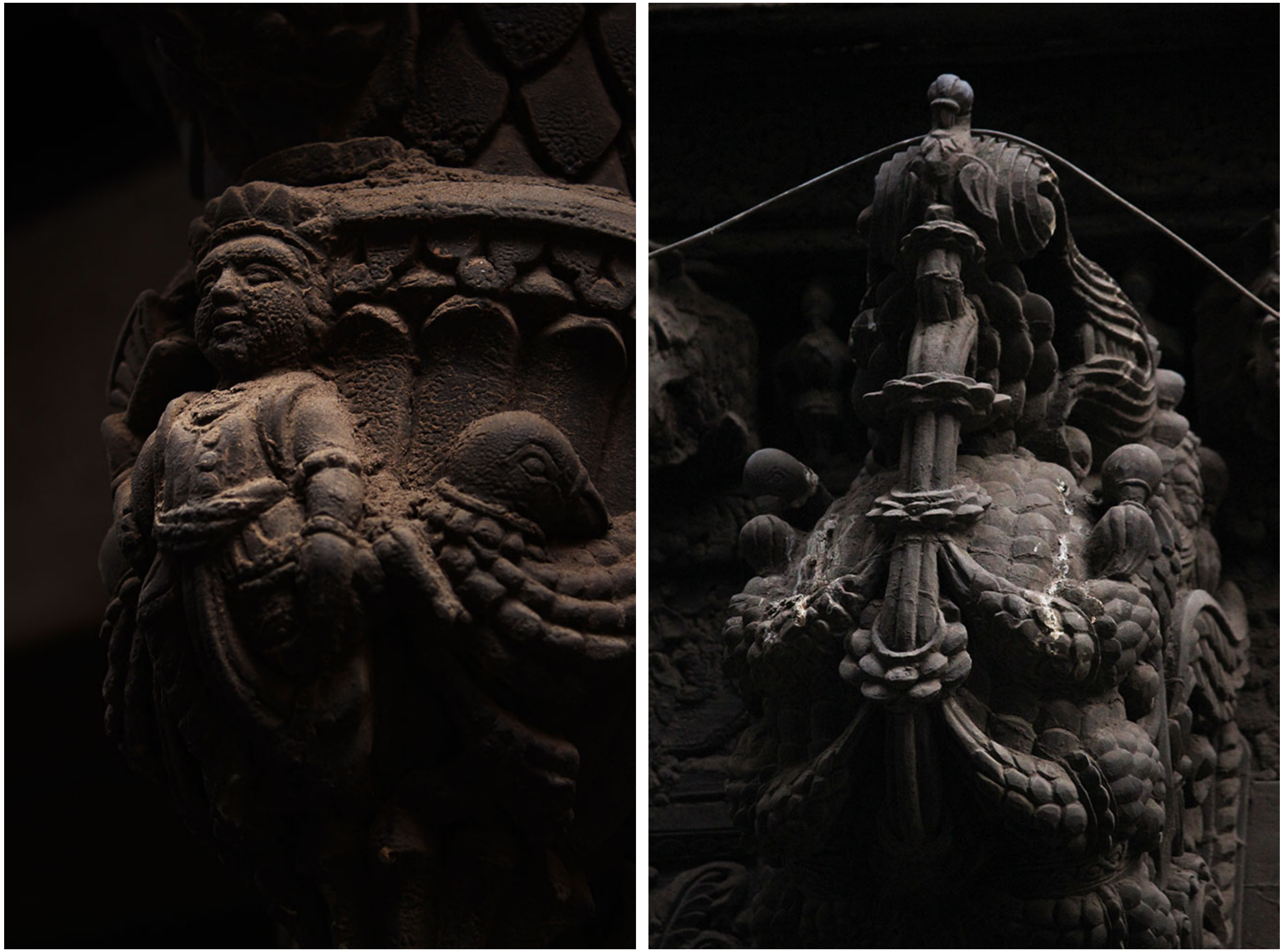

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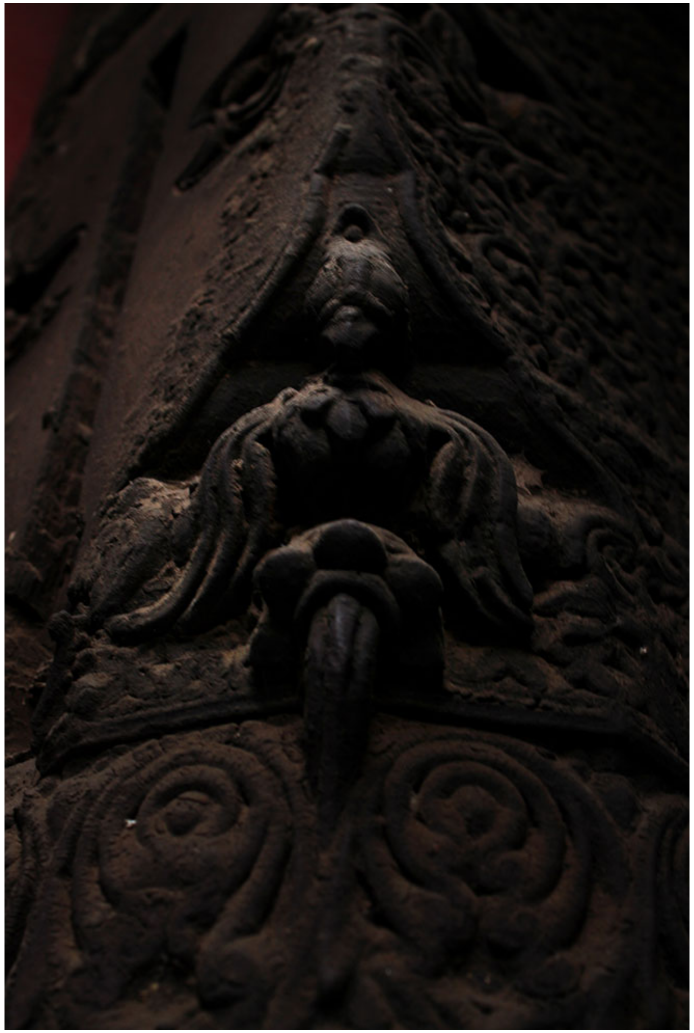

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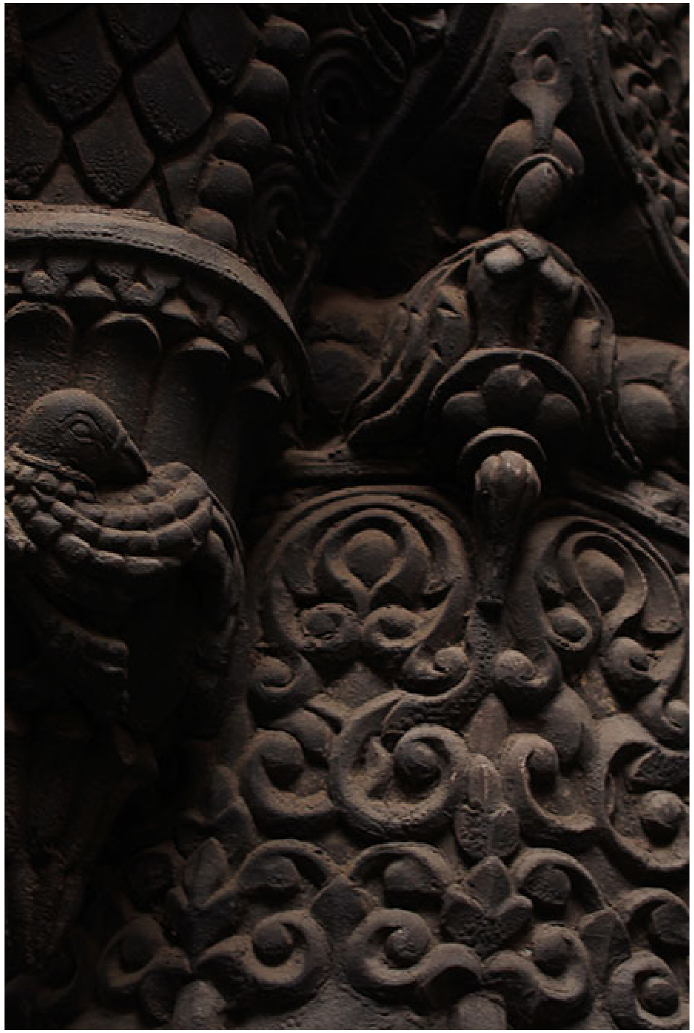

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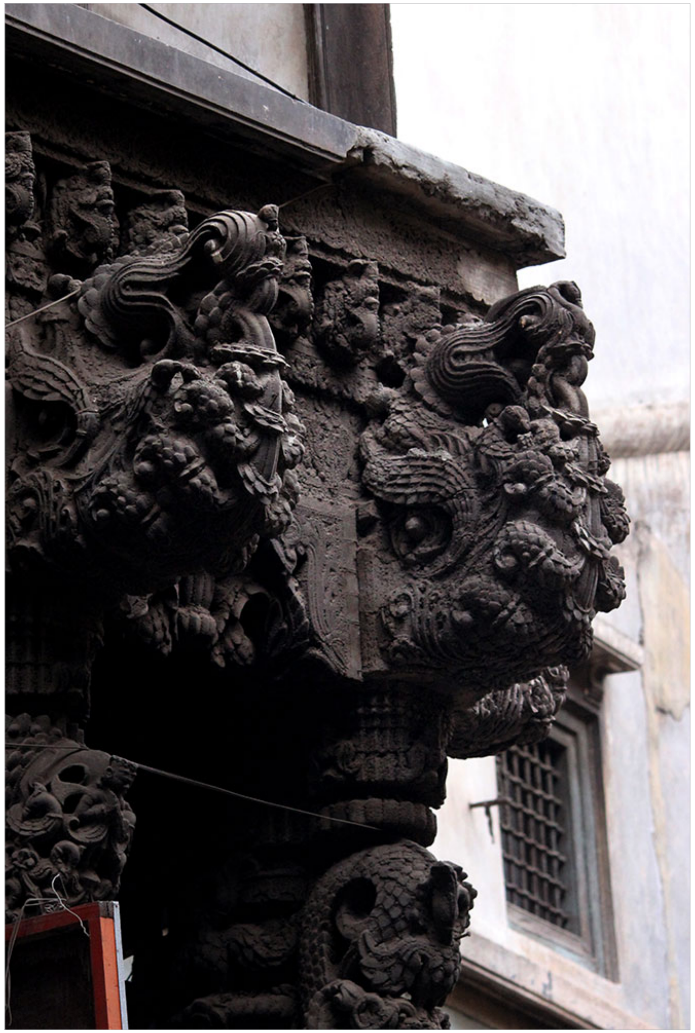

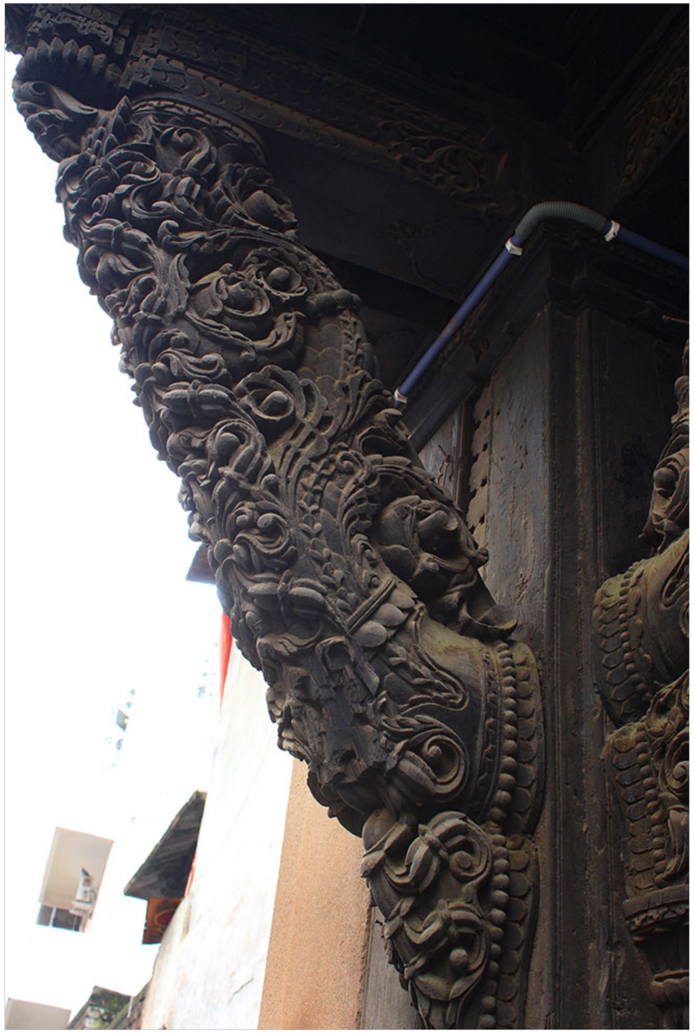

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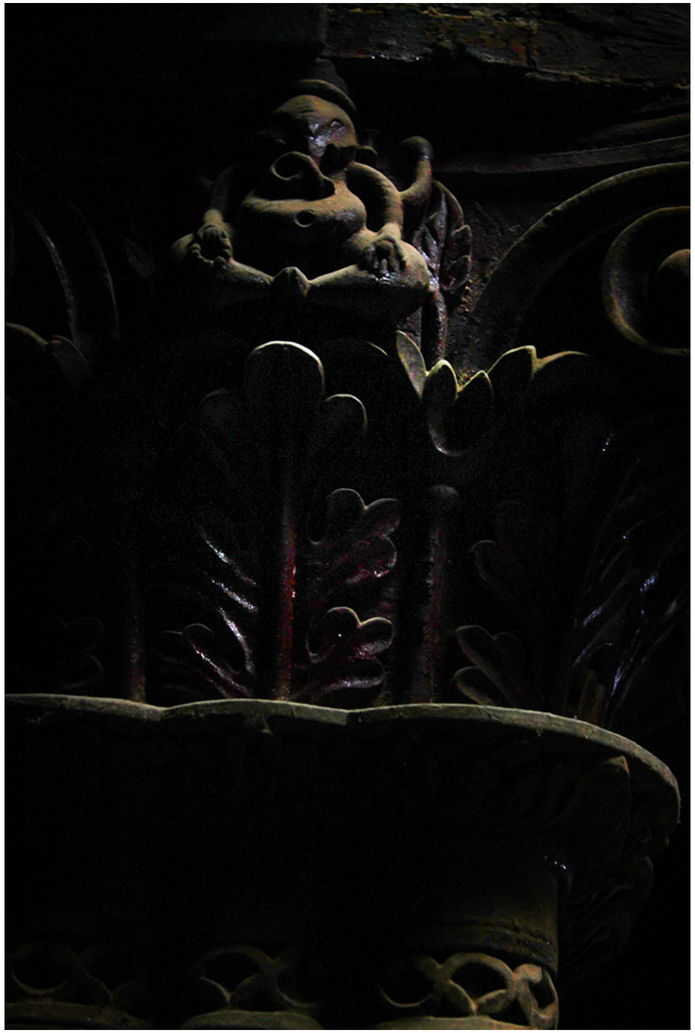

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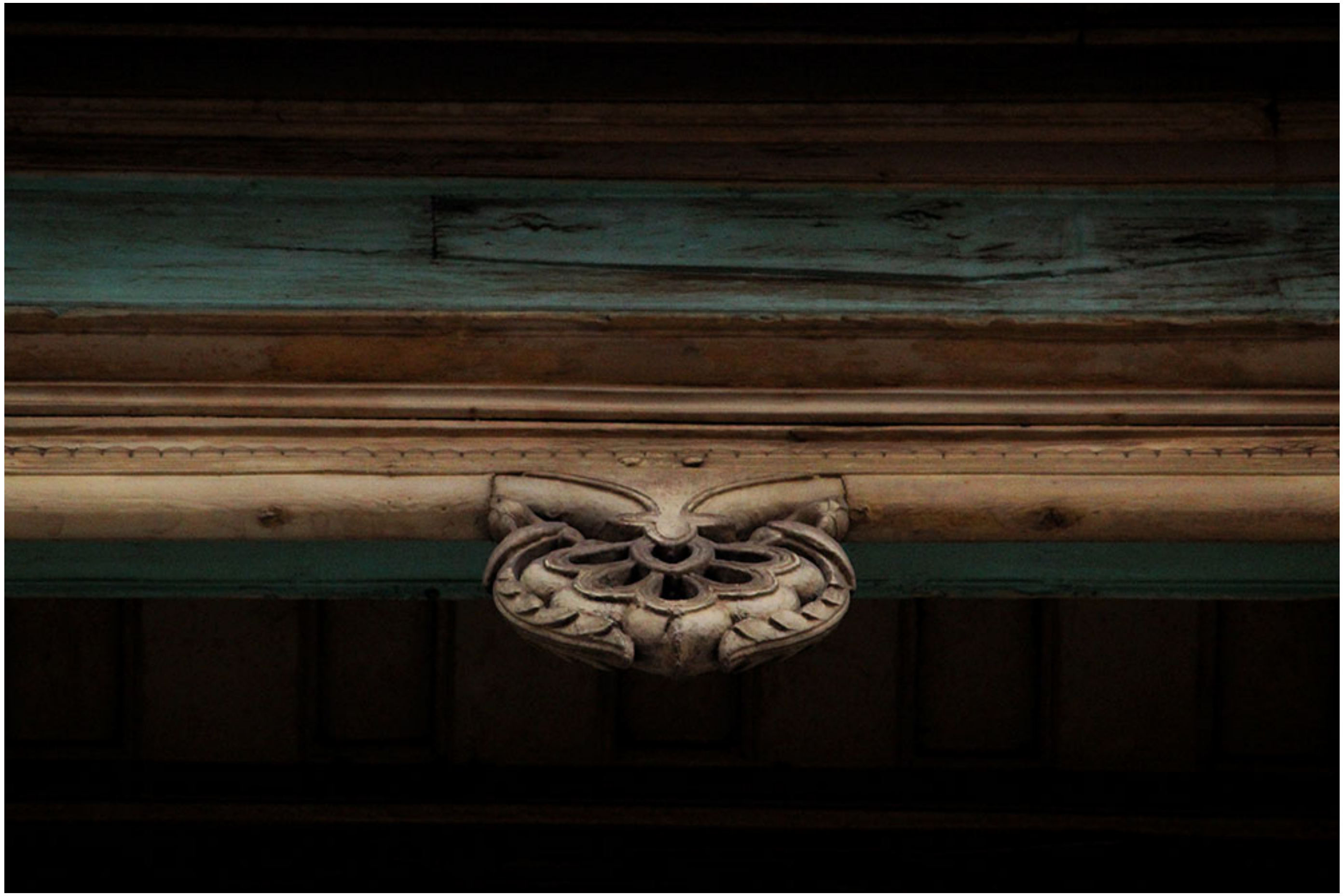

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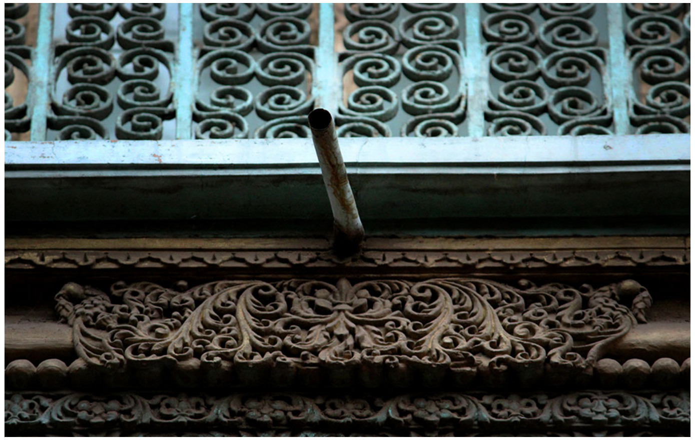

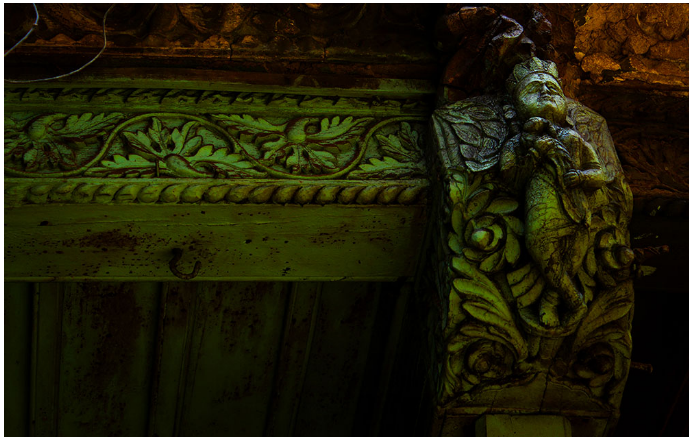

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IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/karnavati-deep-rooted-legacy-architecture/details-carving

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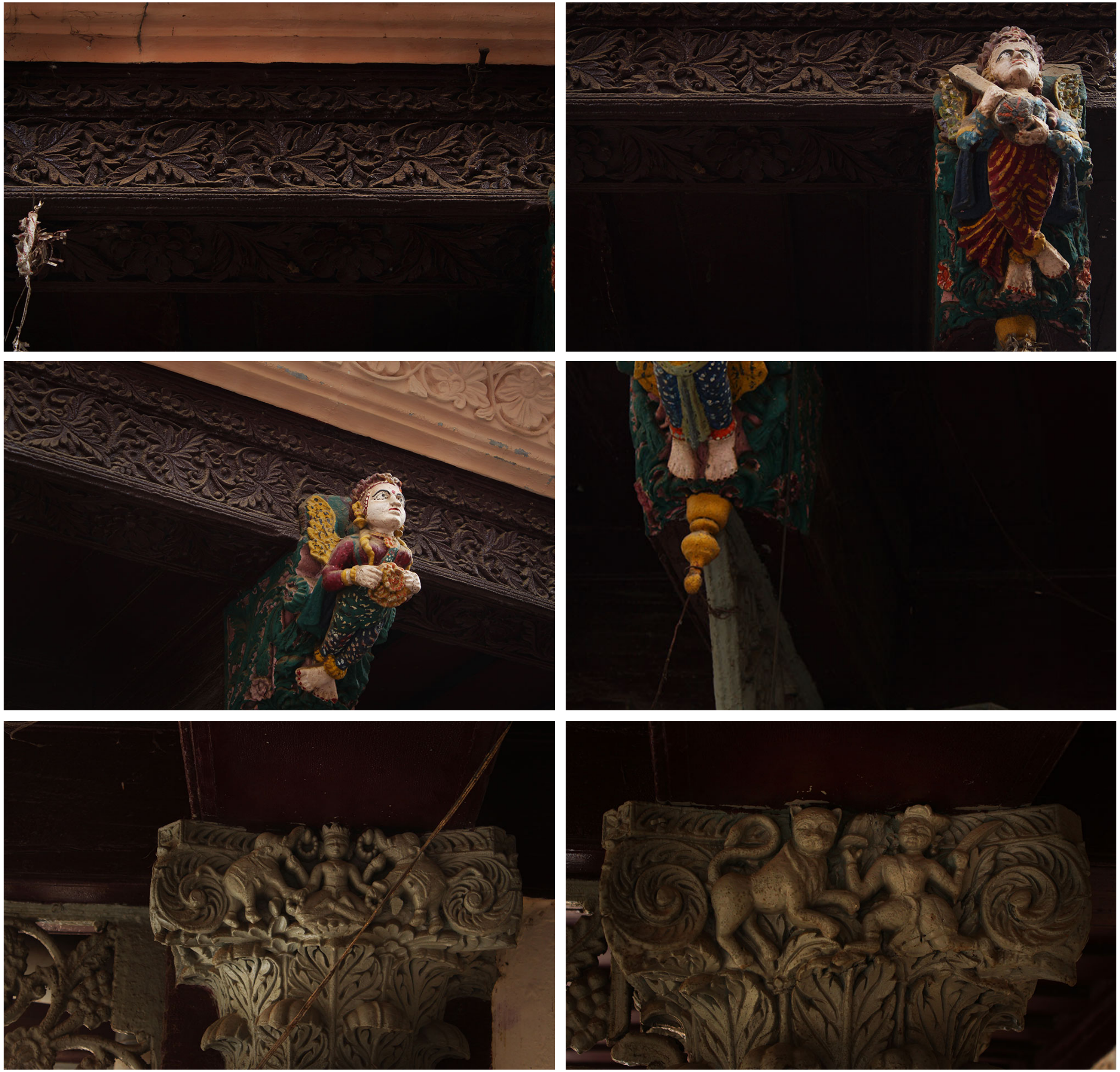

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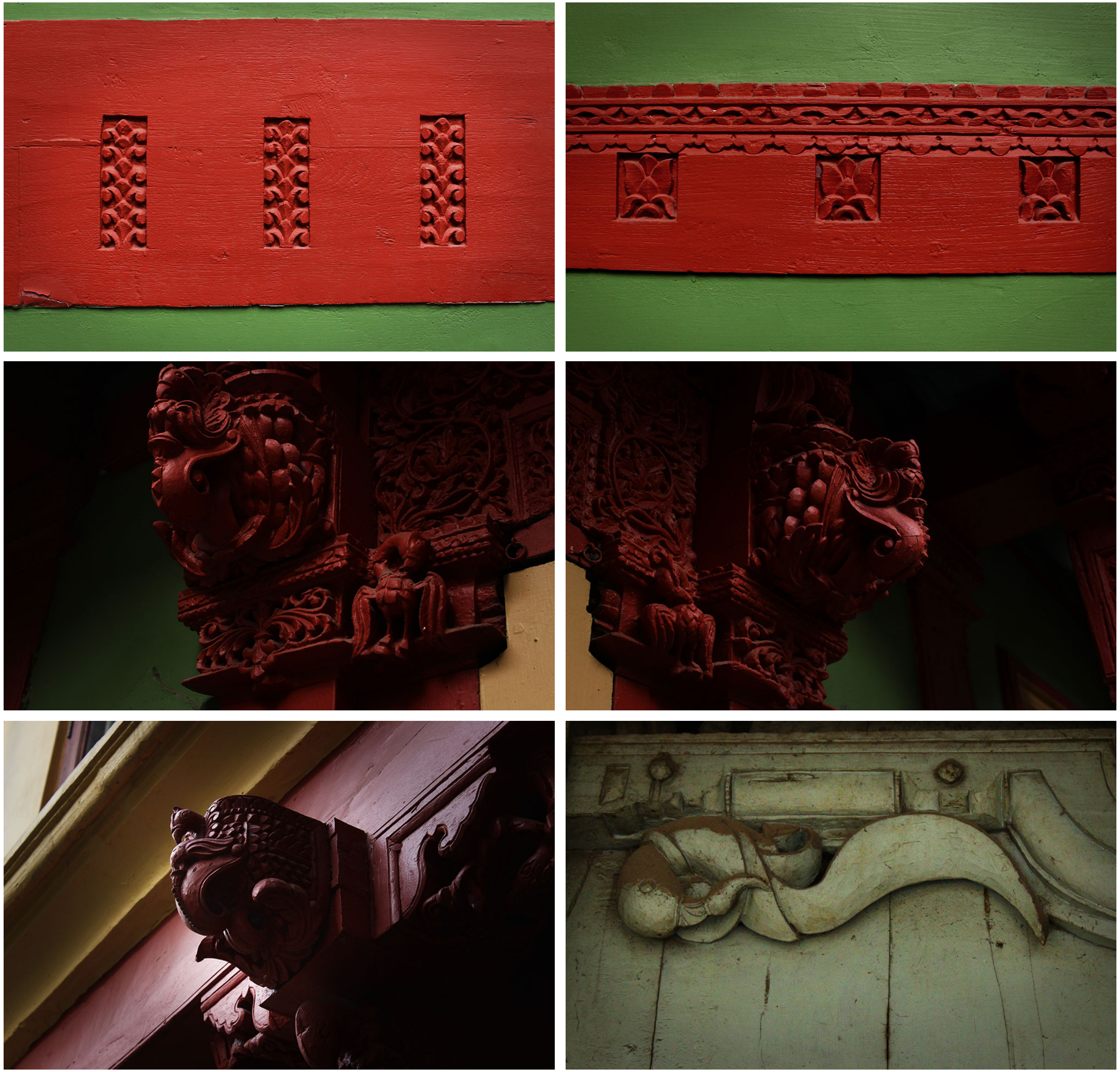

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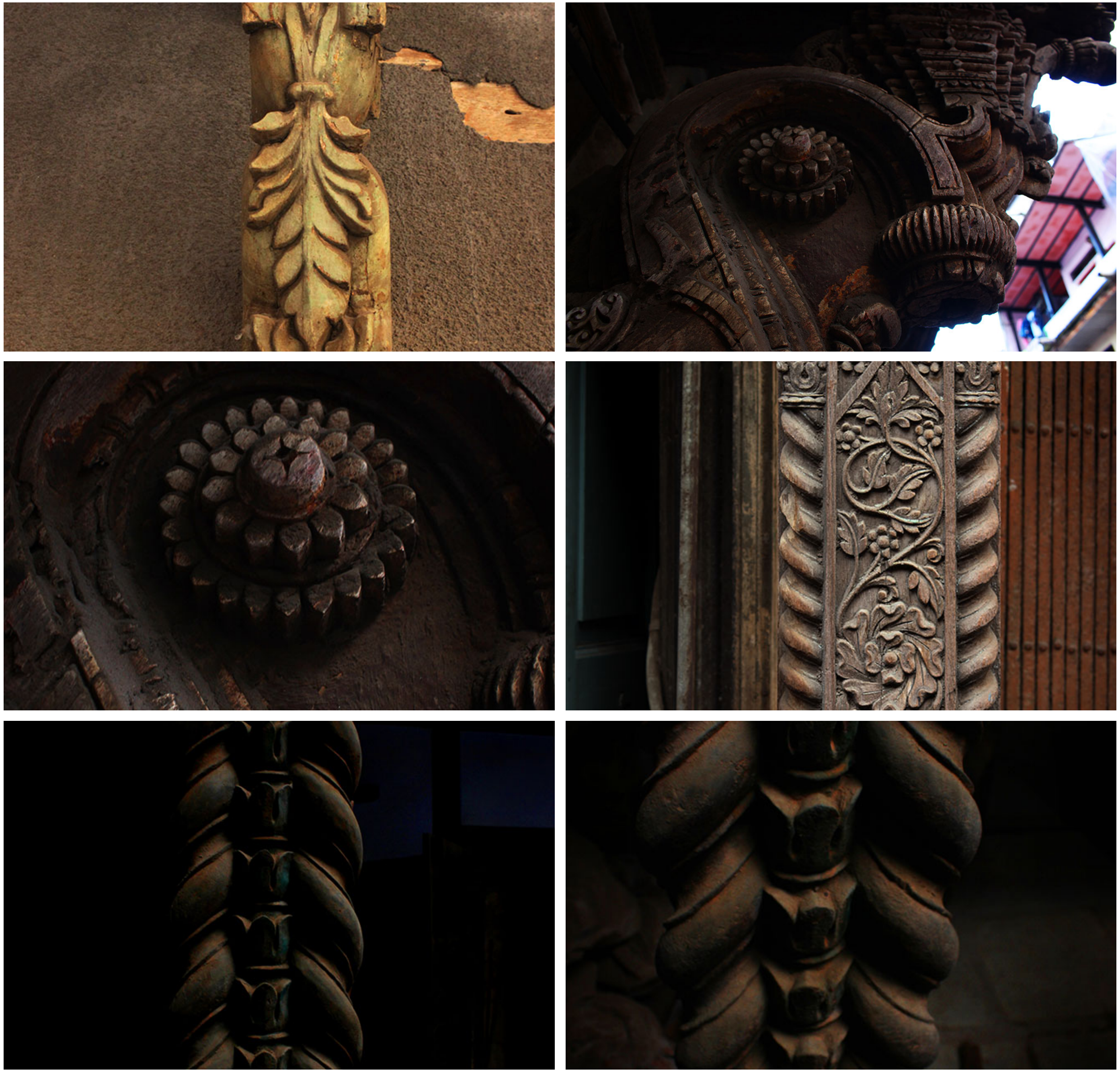

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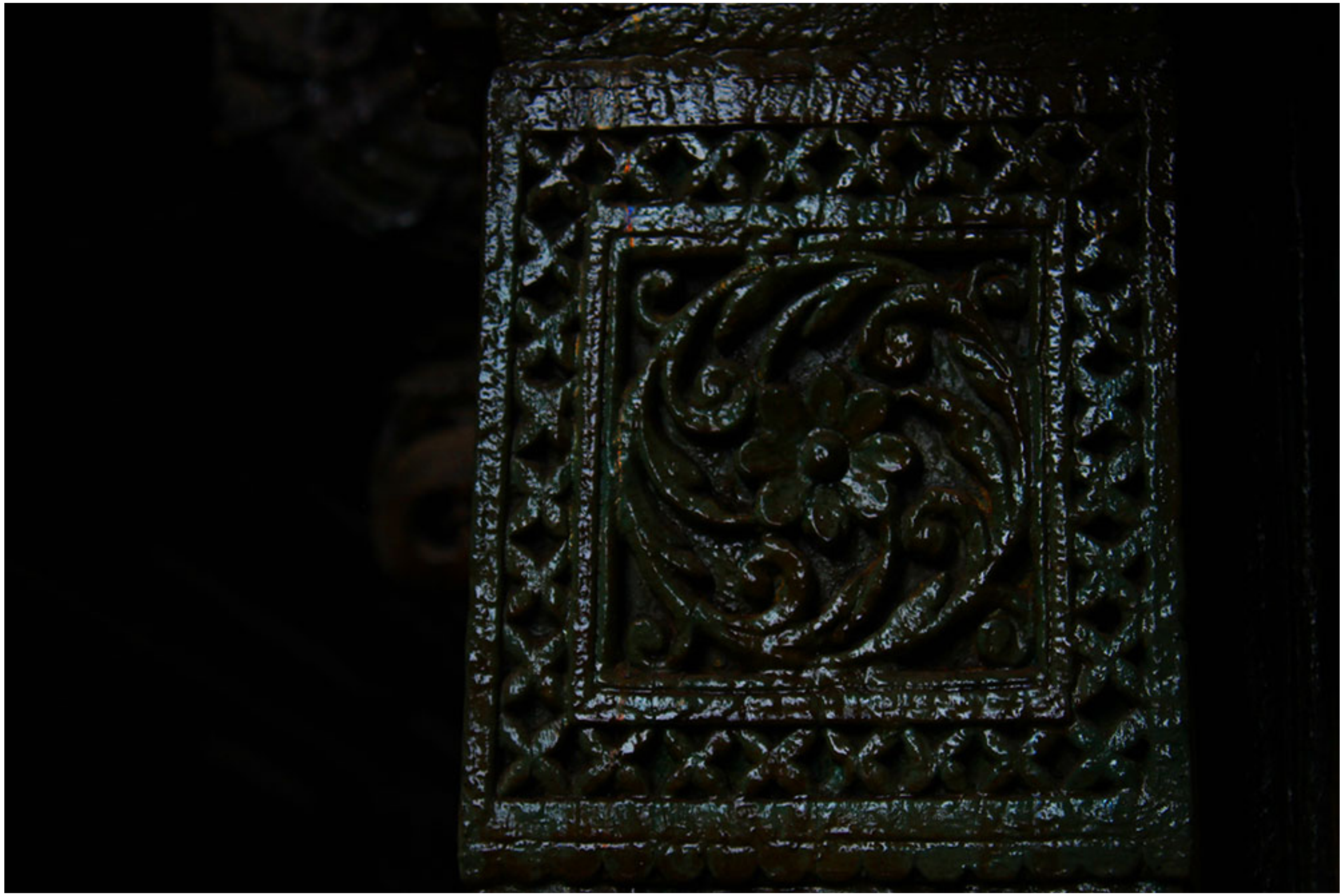

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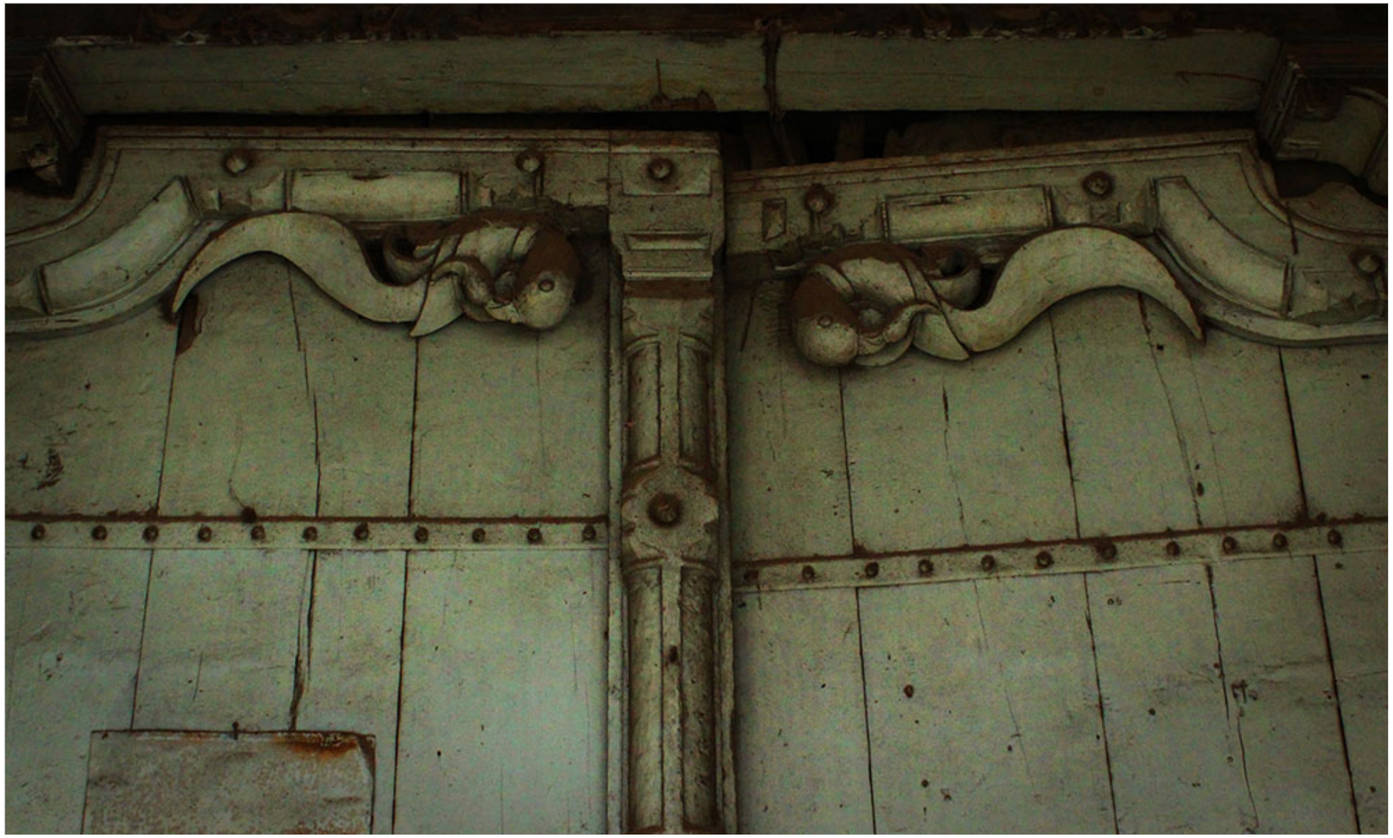
Doors

The Doors: Royal Entry to Experiences

The doors of Havelis are keeping the balance of the whole design composition by staying simple and elegant but stronger and healthier. Most of the doors follow a simple squire pattern with carved borders as frames. Sometimes the detailings of doors include intricately carved designs of birds or human figures resembling angels and most of the time the upper beam of the door frames are decorated with intricately done floral patterns. The economic status of the family is absolutely reflected at the doorsteps of each haveli, some are extensively decorated with intricate wooden carvings and some are simple and hasn't have many ornamentations. The houses which are built in the British era are ornamented with Victorian influenced detailing as well as with Victorian ceramic tiles. If they all are able to chit chat, then the visitors must have been able to hear age-old stories of a bygone era some interesting and some heart-wrenching.



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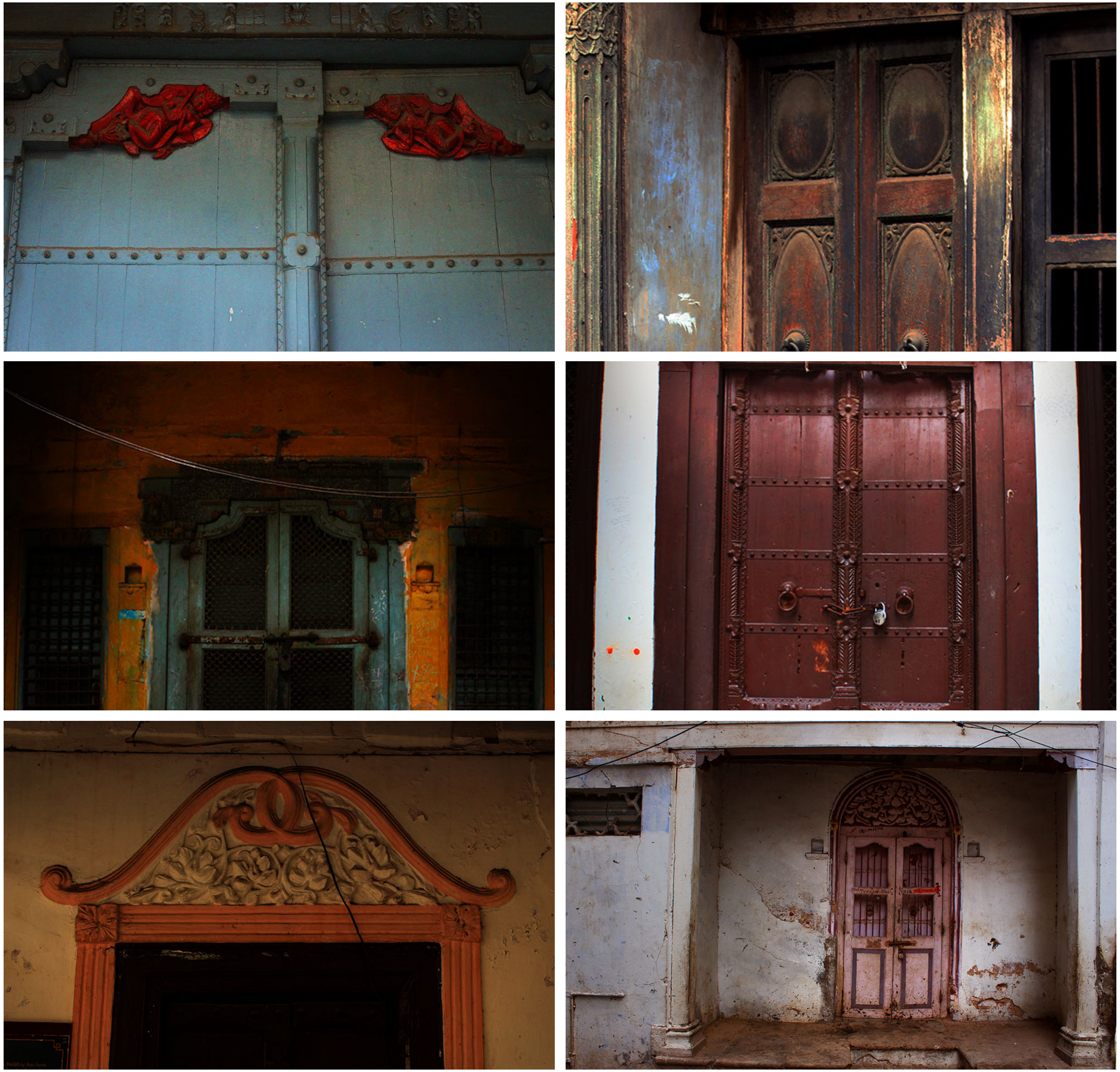

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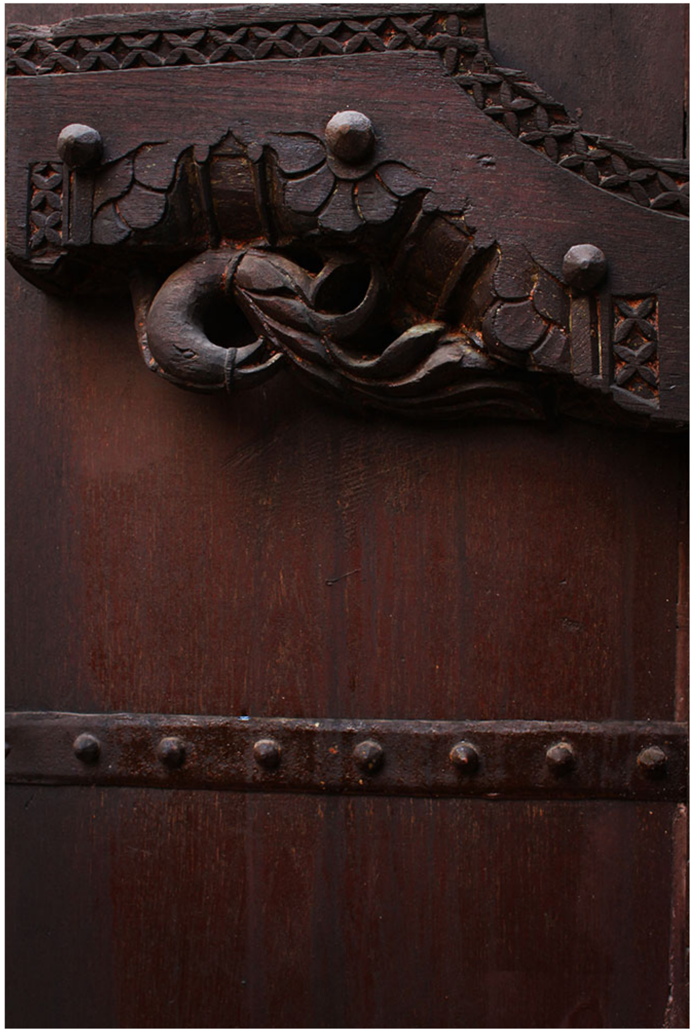

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Pillars

Pillars: The Signature of Karnavati

When you take walk through the lanes of the old city of Ahmedabad will welcome its ravishing beauty of exquisitely wooden engraved designs of Havelis. The walk through the lanes will strike and make you think, why did they have used a lot of wood for constructing houses. Pillars and brackets will grab attention at first glance. In the construction of pol housing wooden pillars play an inevitable role because the geography of the location is very much prone to earthquakes and that is the major reason they have majorly consumed wood as raw material as quake impact is in proportionate with the weight of the structure. Wood is highly resistant to an earthquake as it has a high strength-to-weight ratio. It also has properties of ductility and its cellulose fibers make it highly effective to undertake tensile stresses. These are the reasons why nature planned to ruin Ahmedabad, the old city was absolutely safe and the natural calamity couldn't ruin them. That shows the age-old architectural techniques are perfect as an example of sustainable design. One must say the architects of that bygone era were extremely talented, they knew how to do a design harmoniously, how to keep rhythm and balance and they were well aware of creating classic creations rather than short-lasting fads. The pillars of Havelis can be quoted as a signature of the Ahmedabad architecture and the roots of such pillars must have reached with the arrival of Marathas because the engravings and design are the true amalgamations of Maratha - Mughal architecture. Most of the time pillars remain simple and linear with intricately engraved brackets which are diagonally connecting the pillars and the beams at the top inverted 'L' angle. These brackets are usually in the carved form of elephants or horses as well as yalis and sometimes very minutely done flora and fauna.

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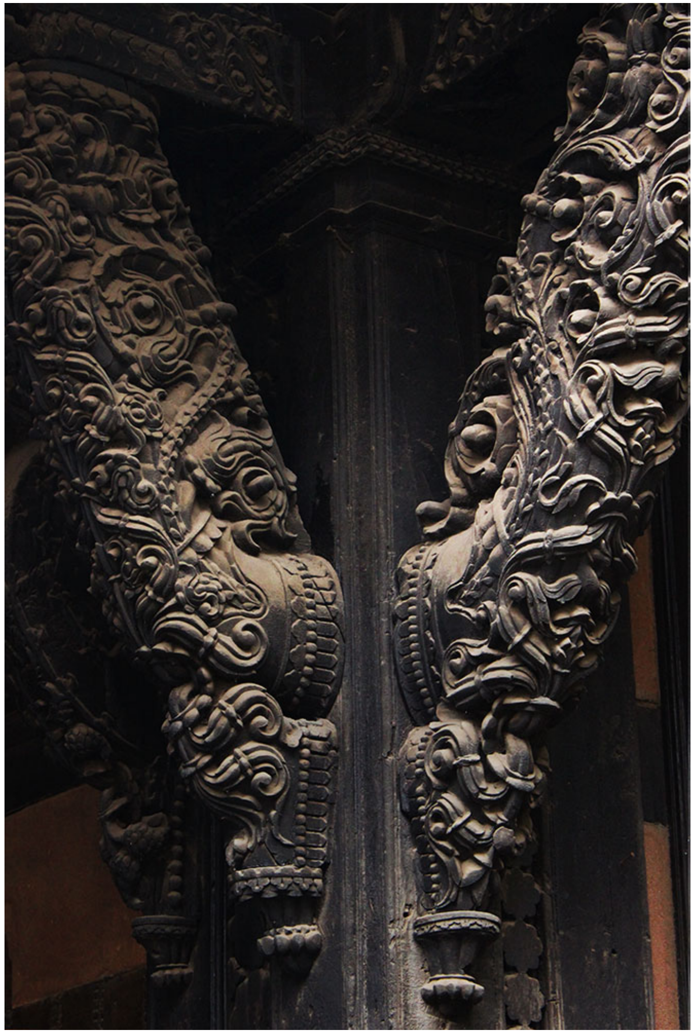

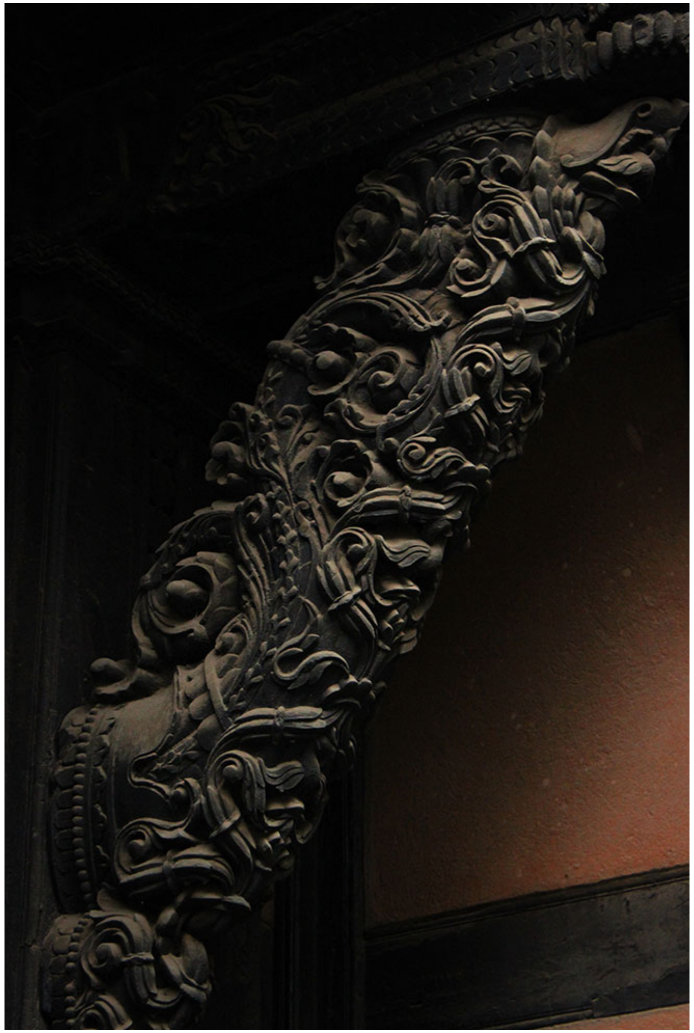

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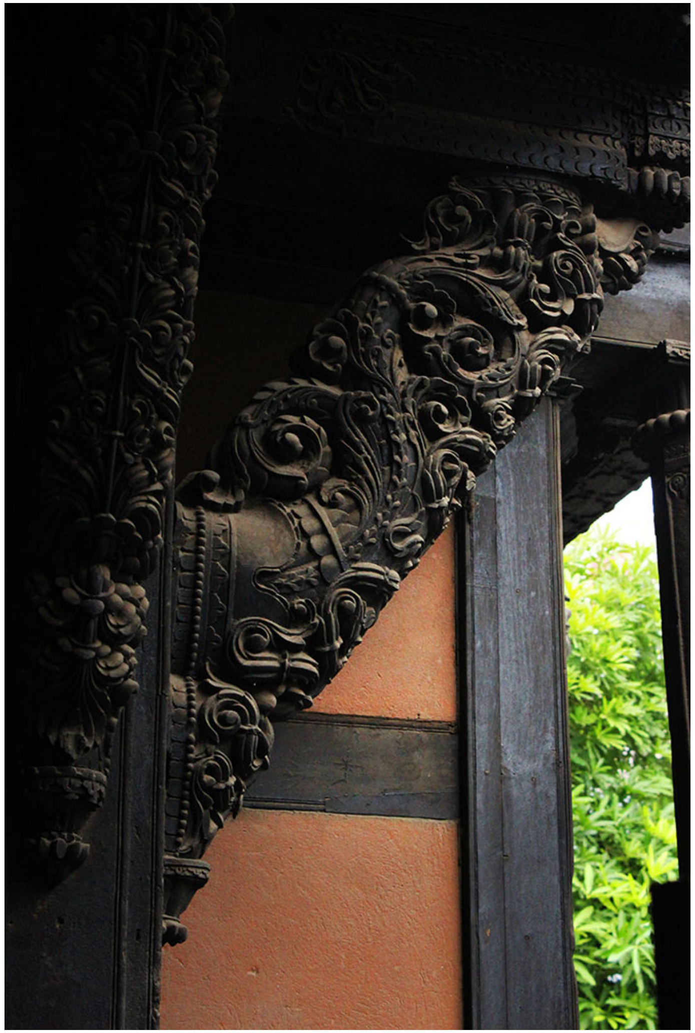

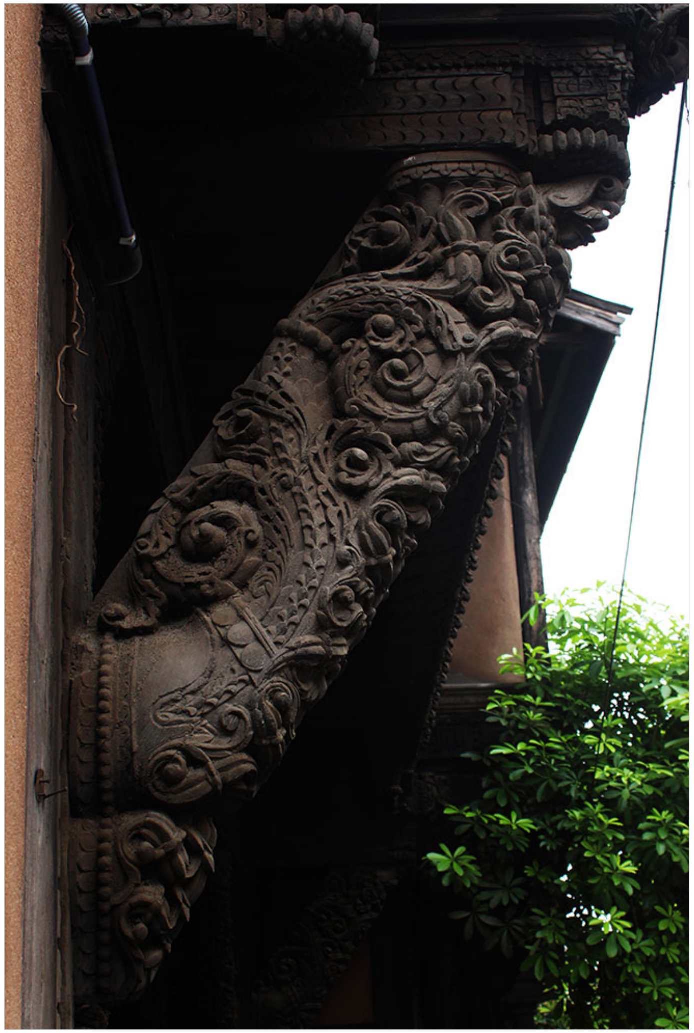

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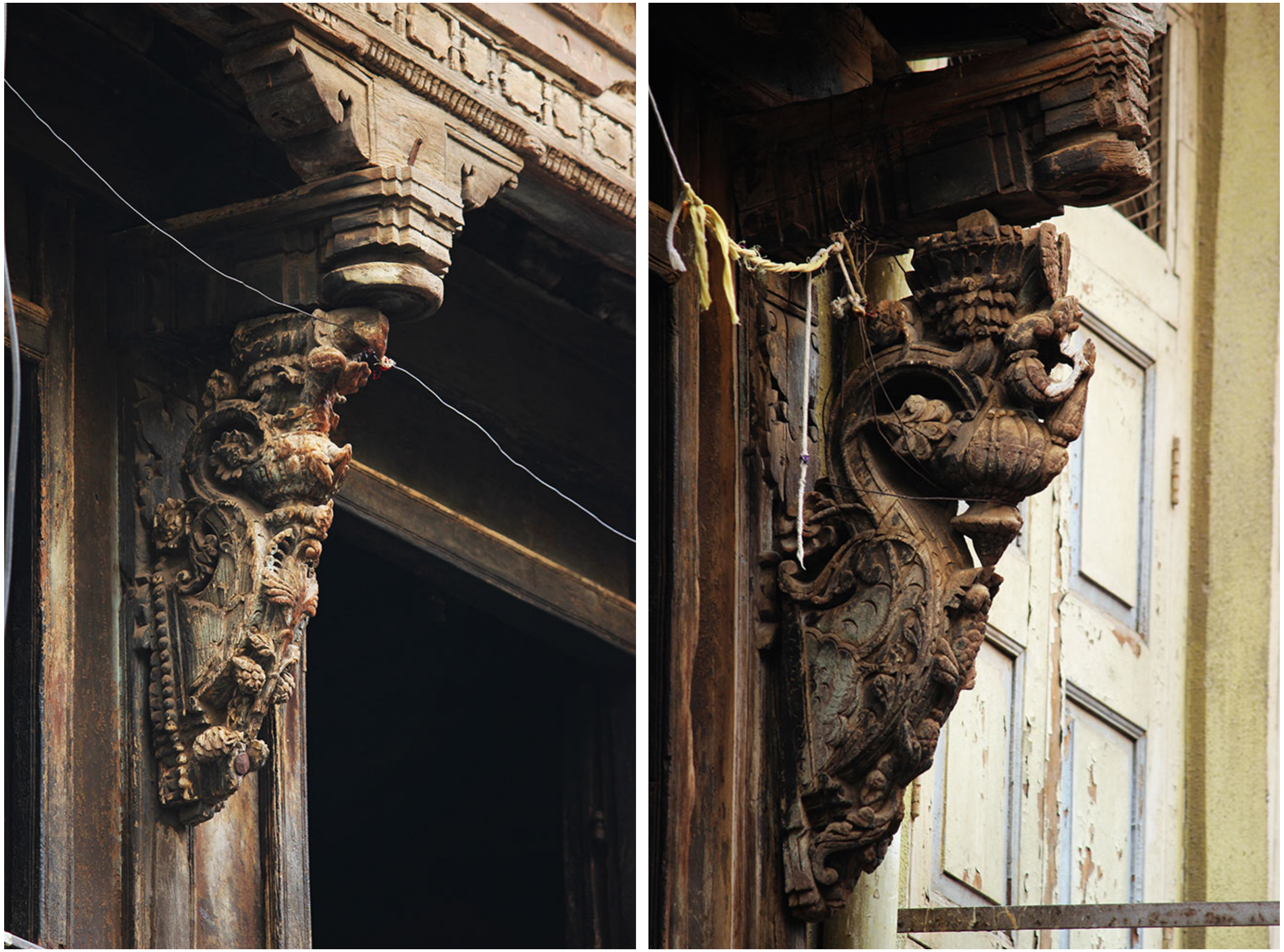

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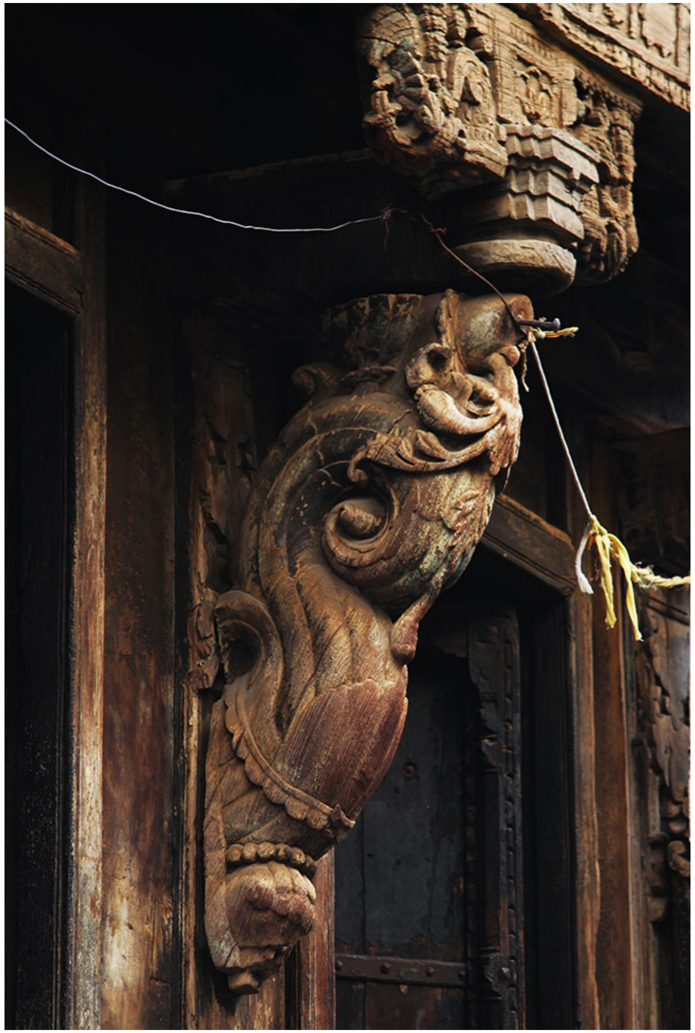

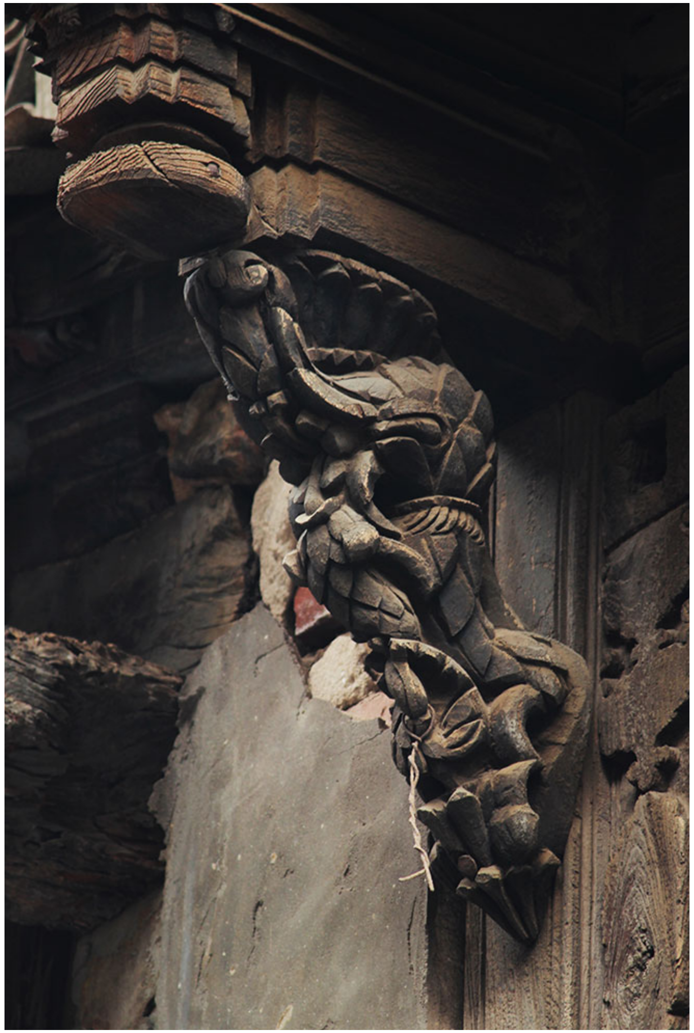

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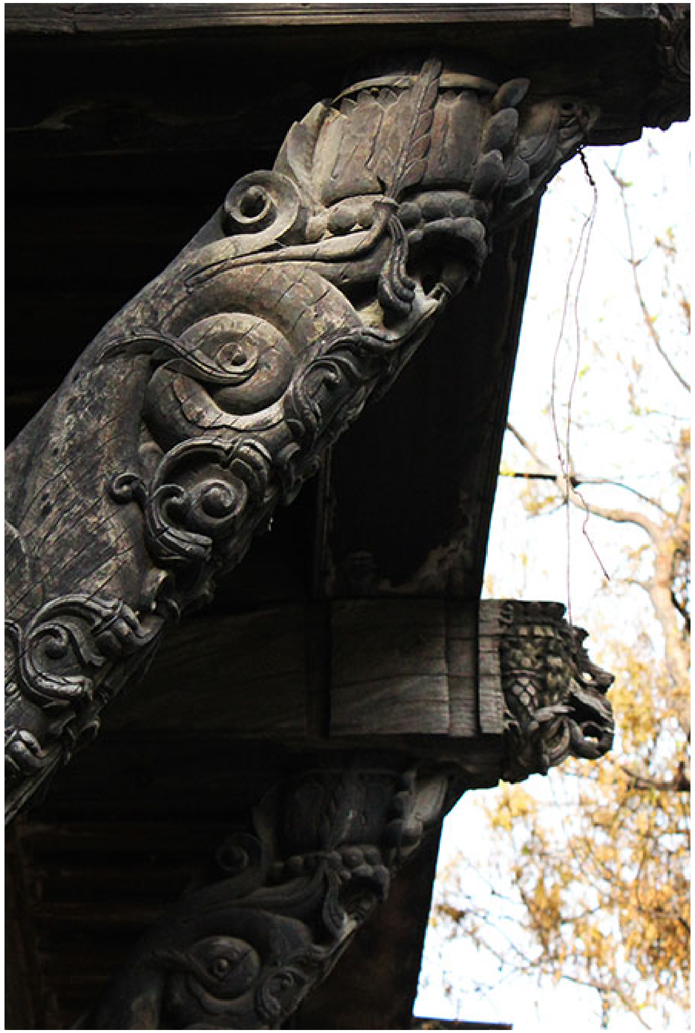

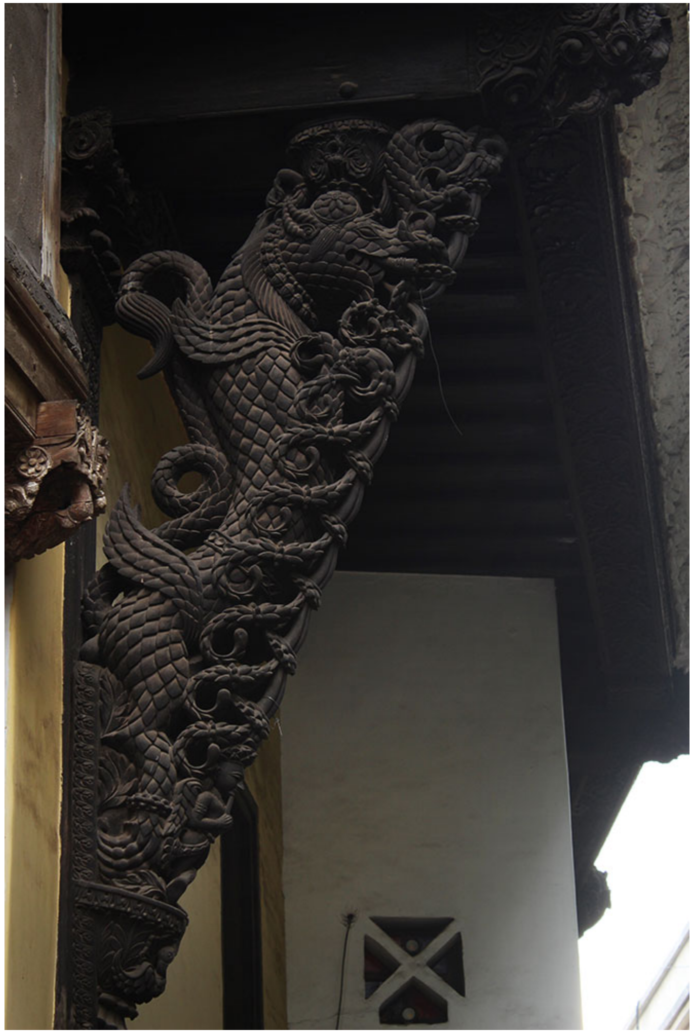

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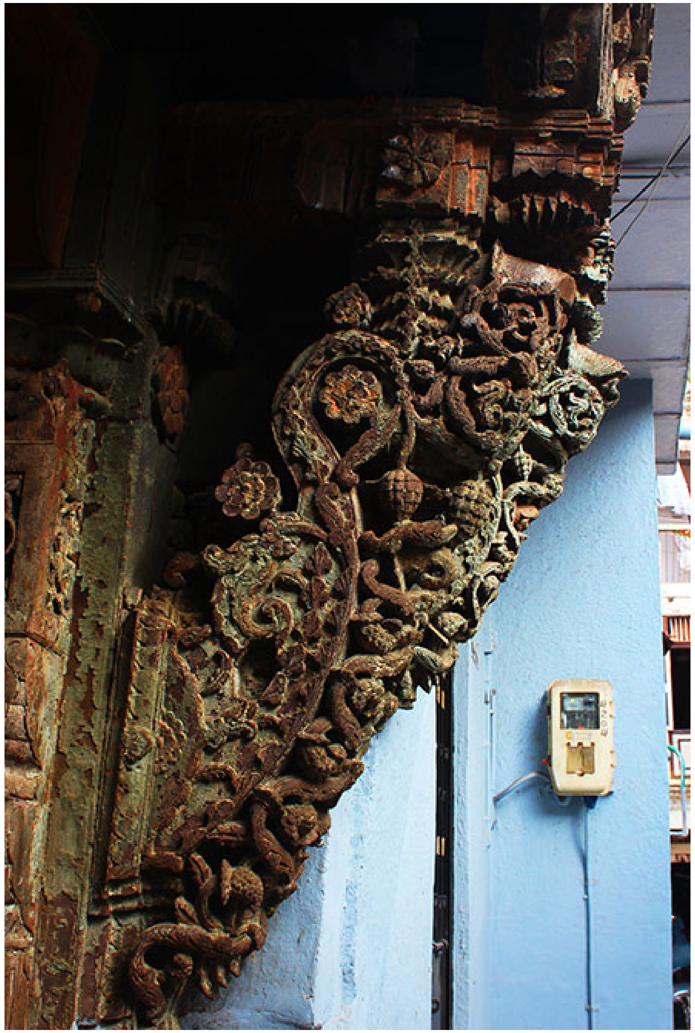

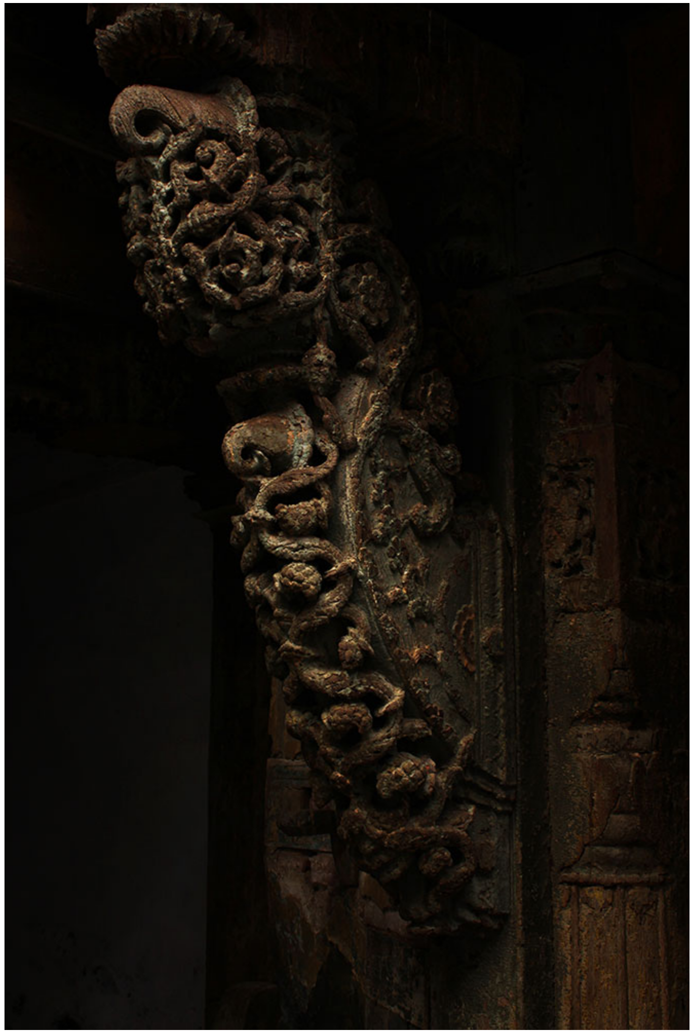

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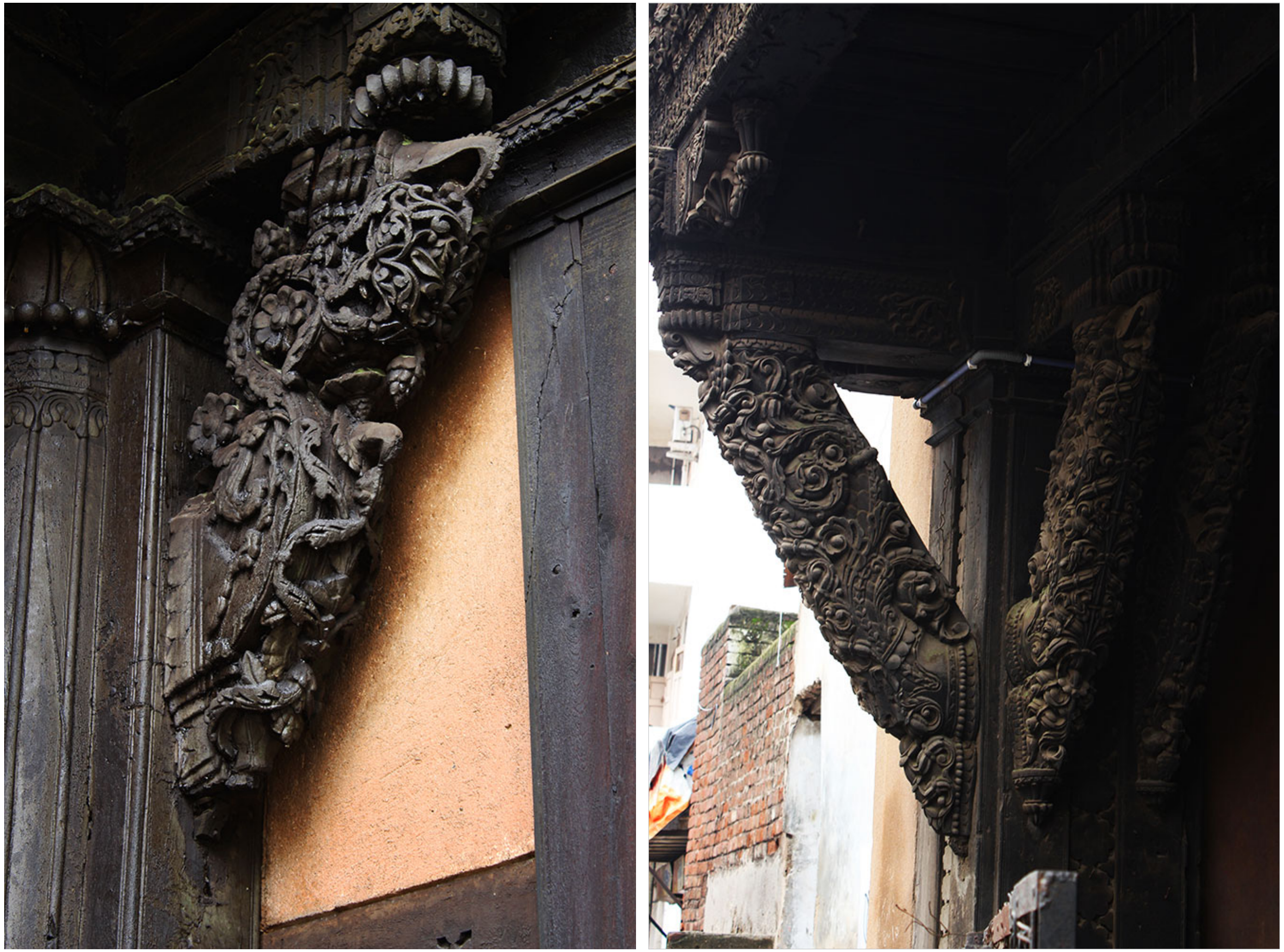

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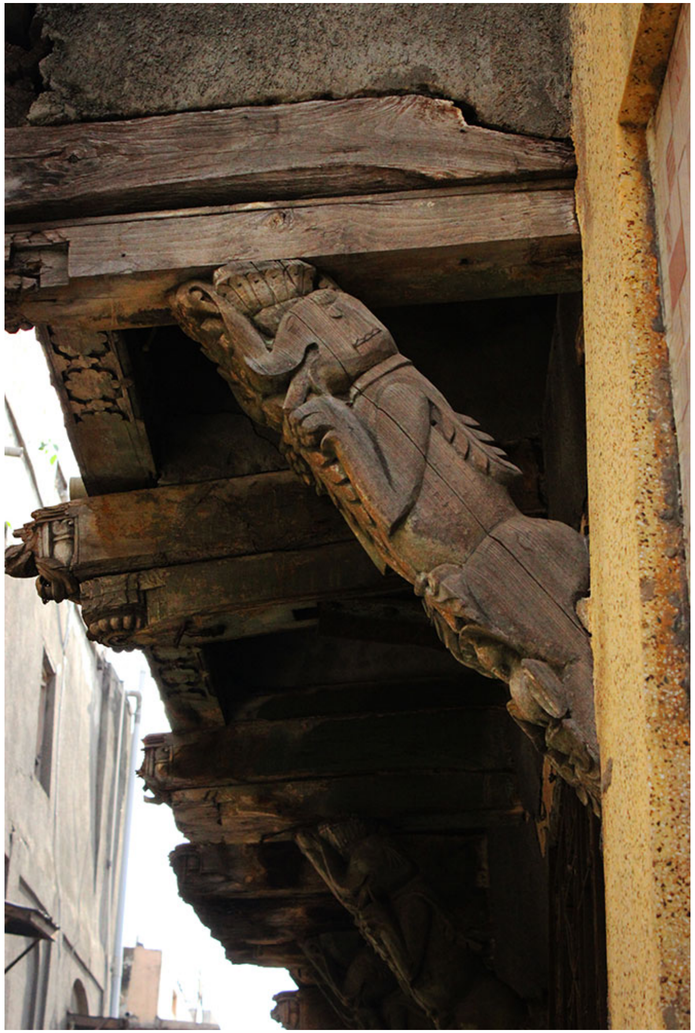

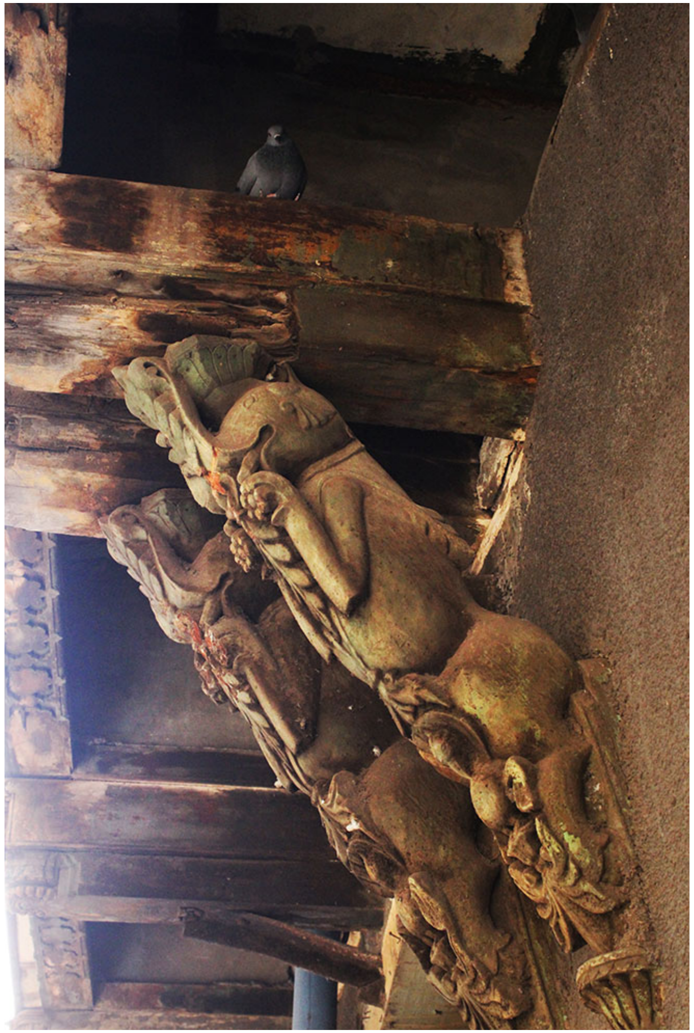

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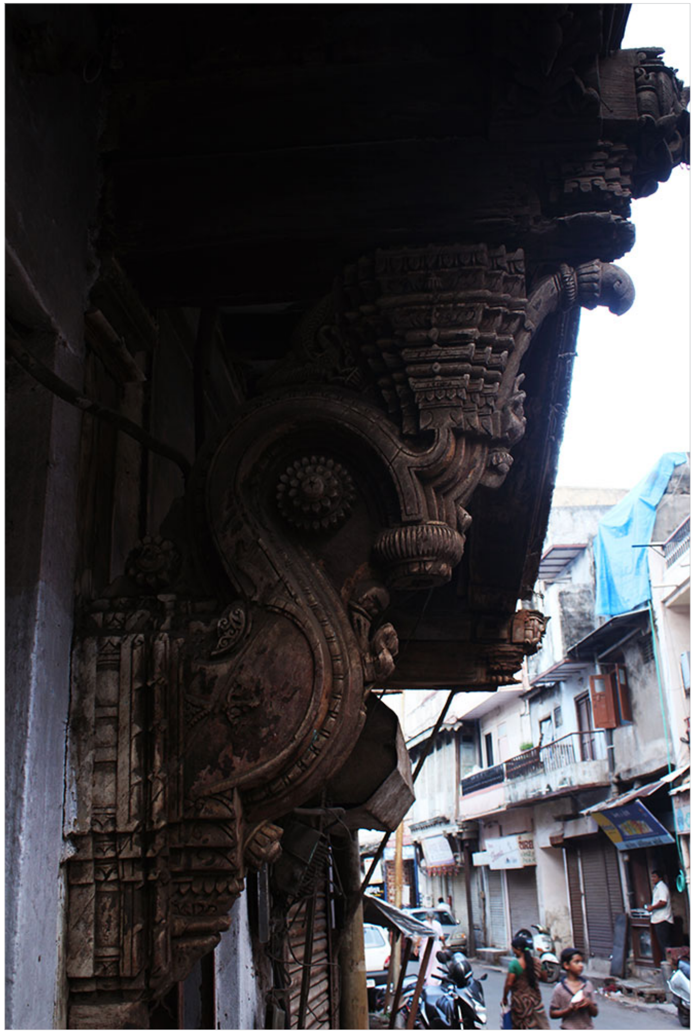

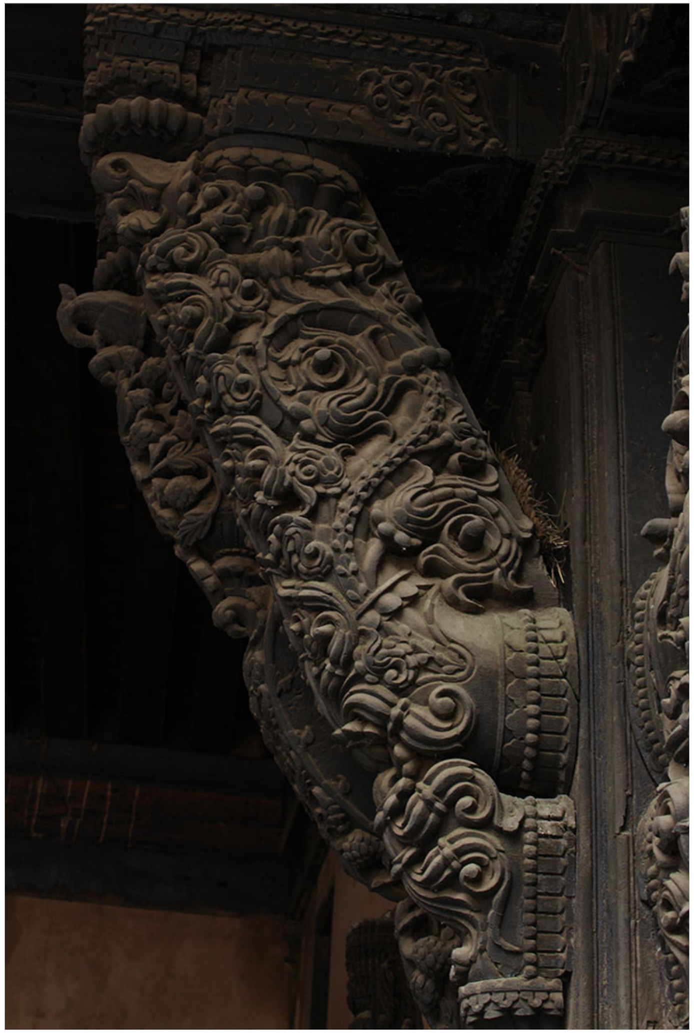

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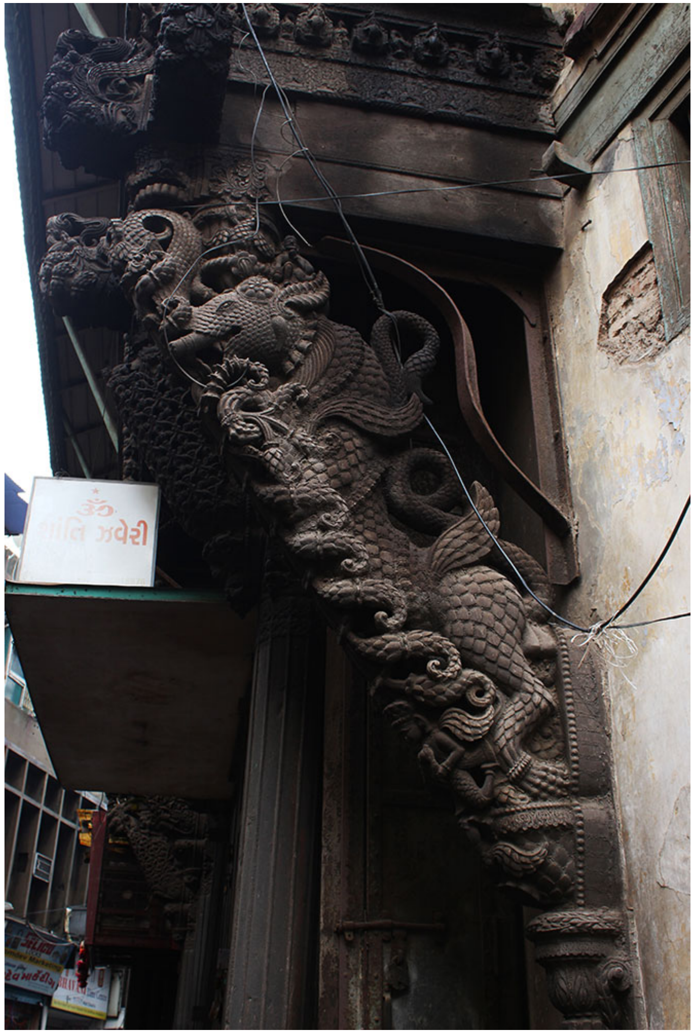

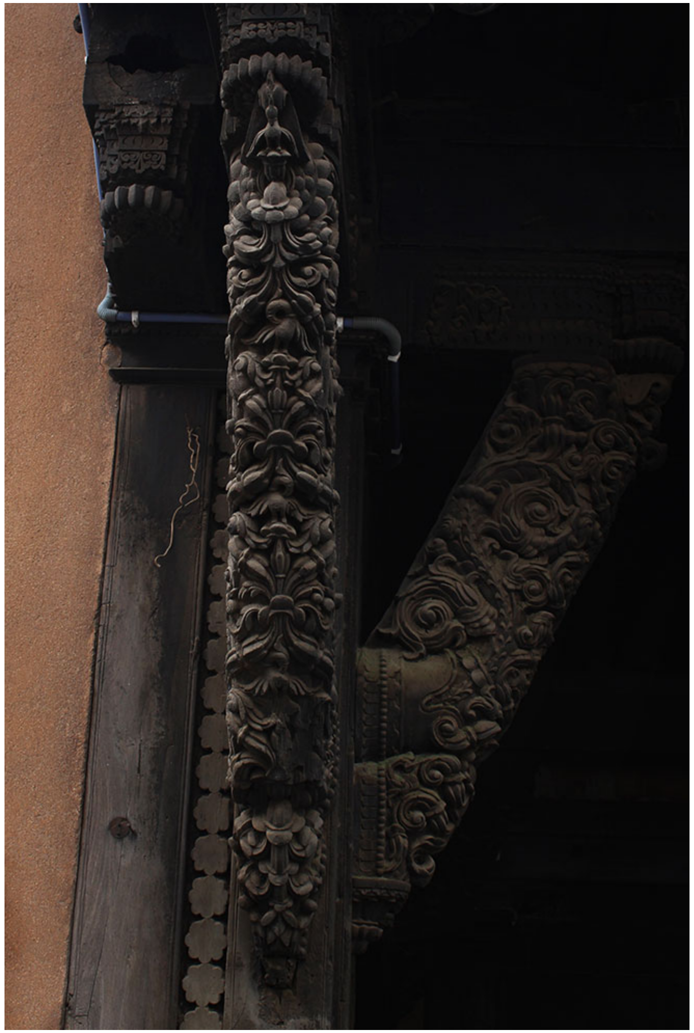

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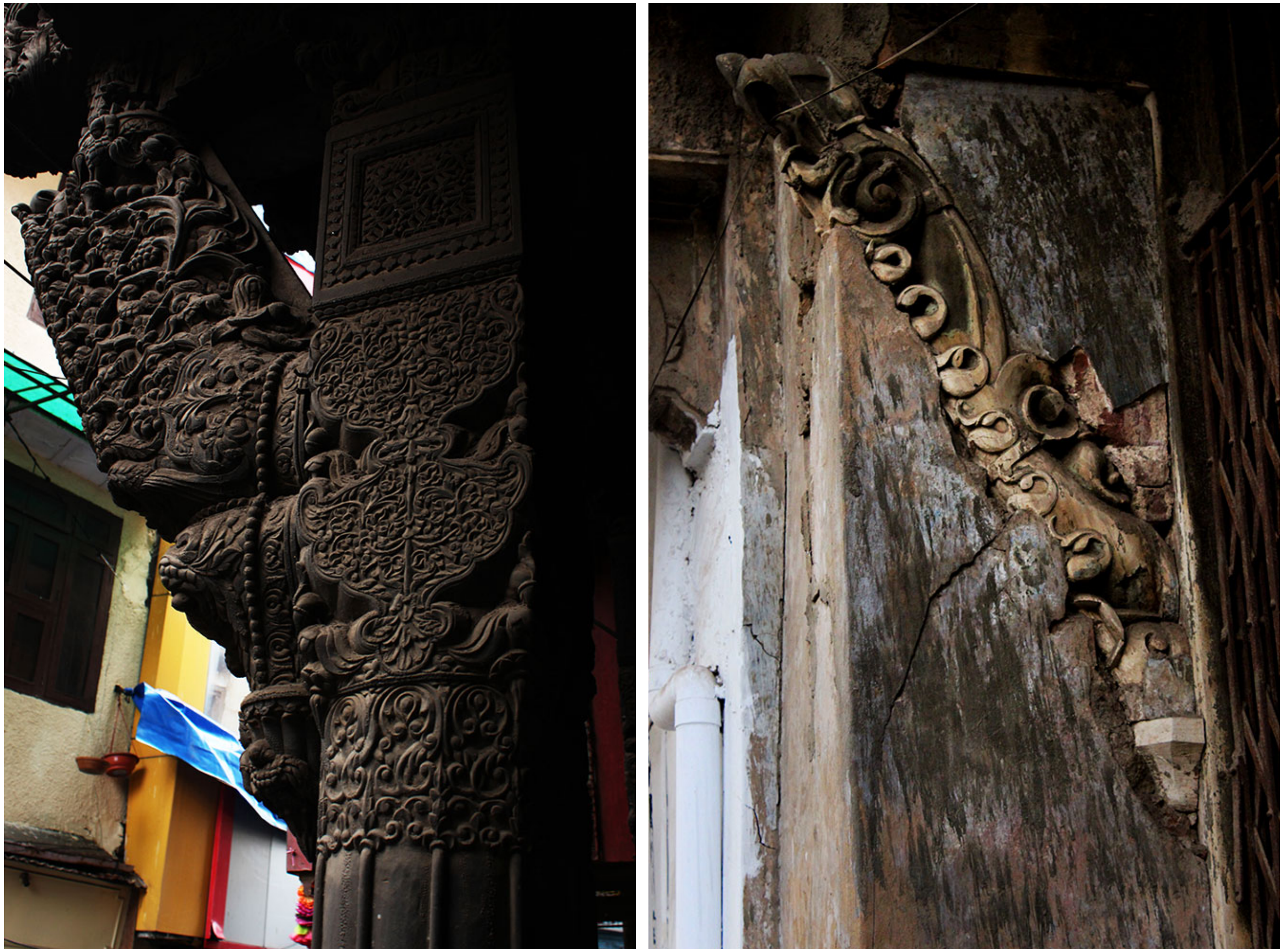

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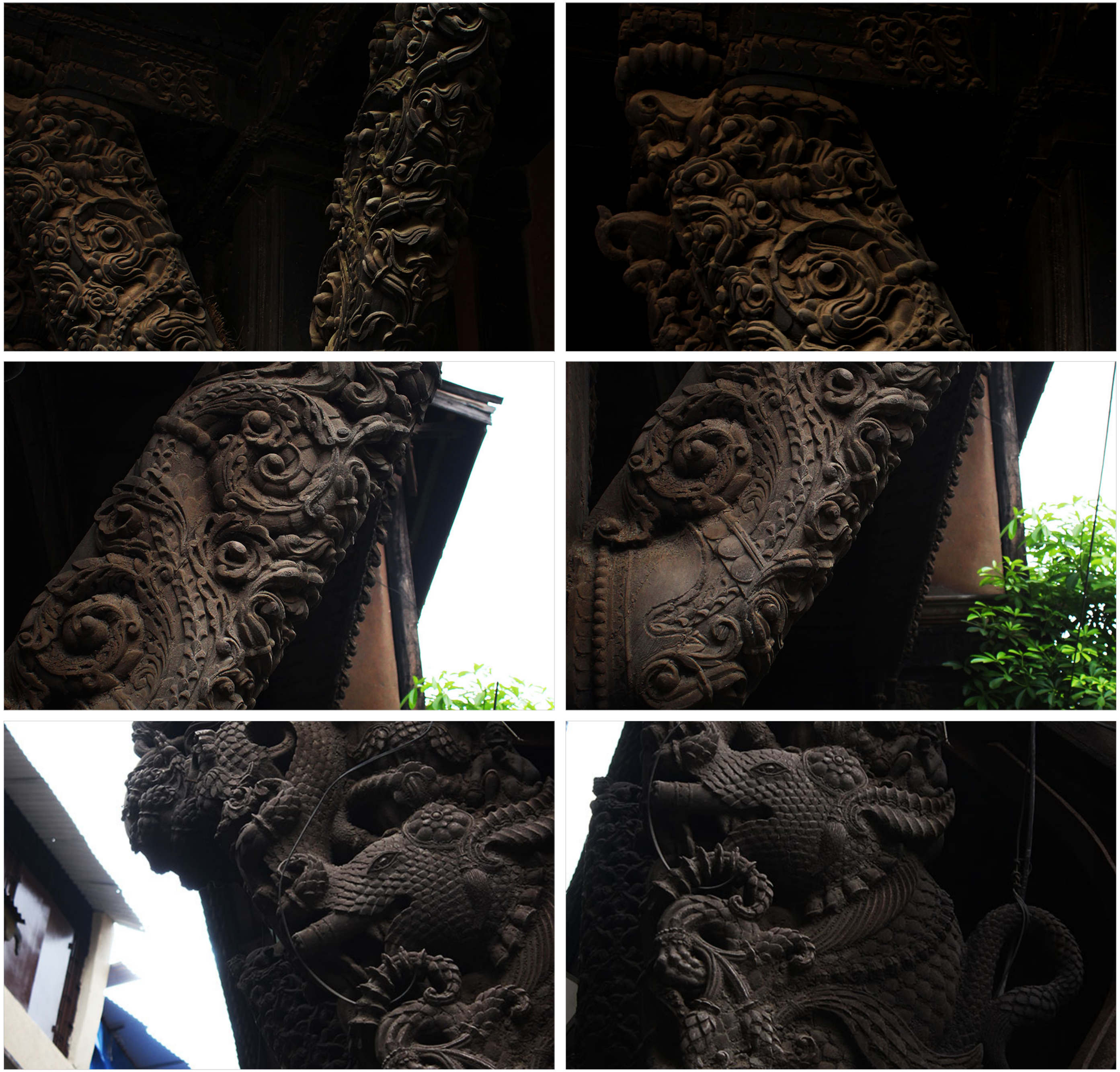

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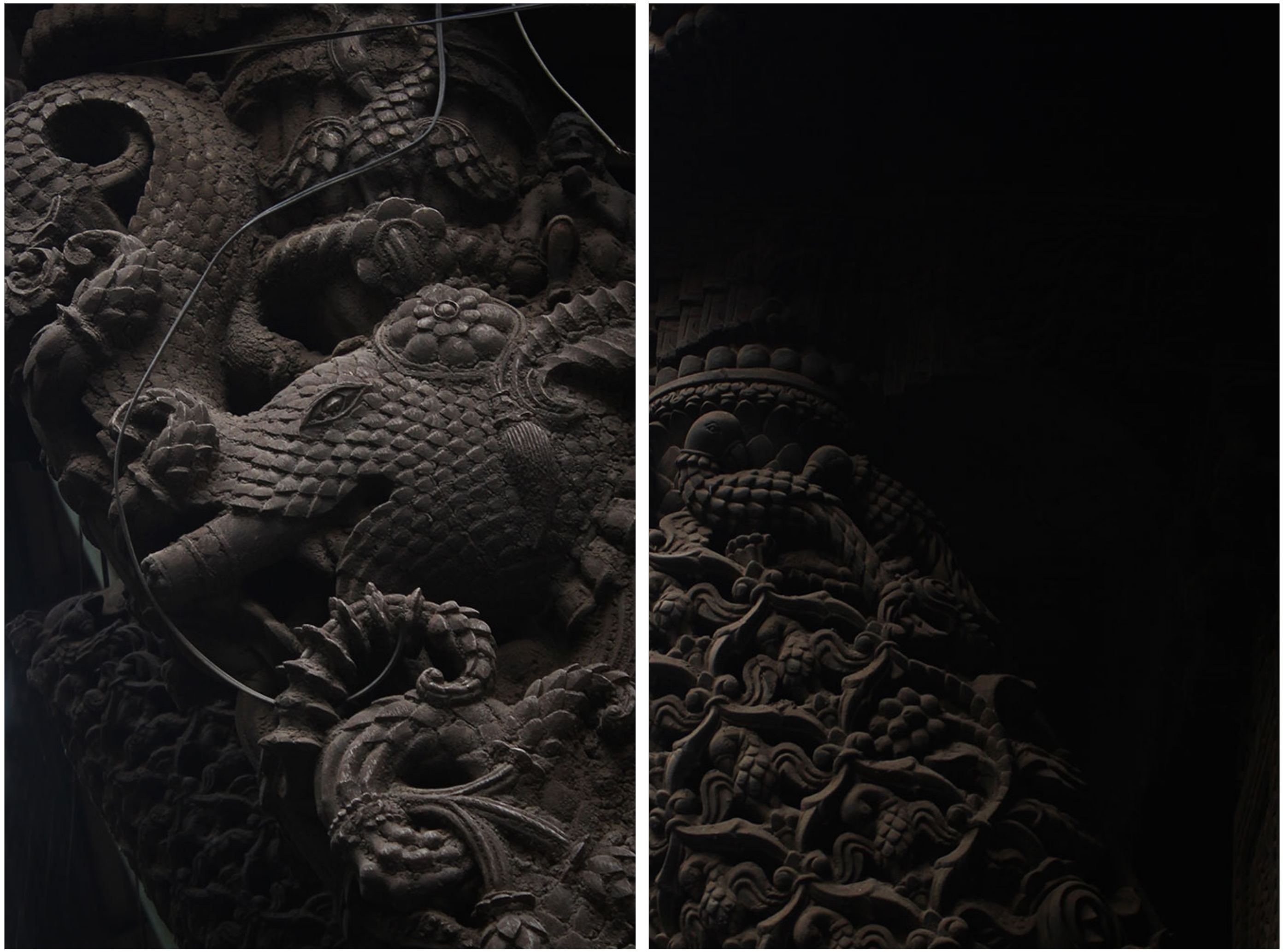

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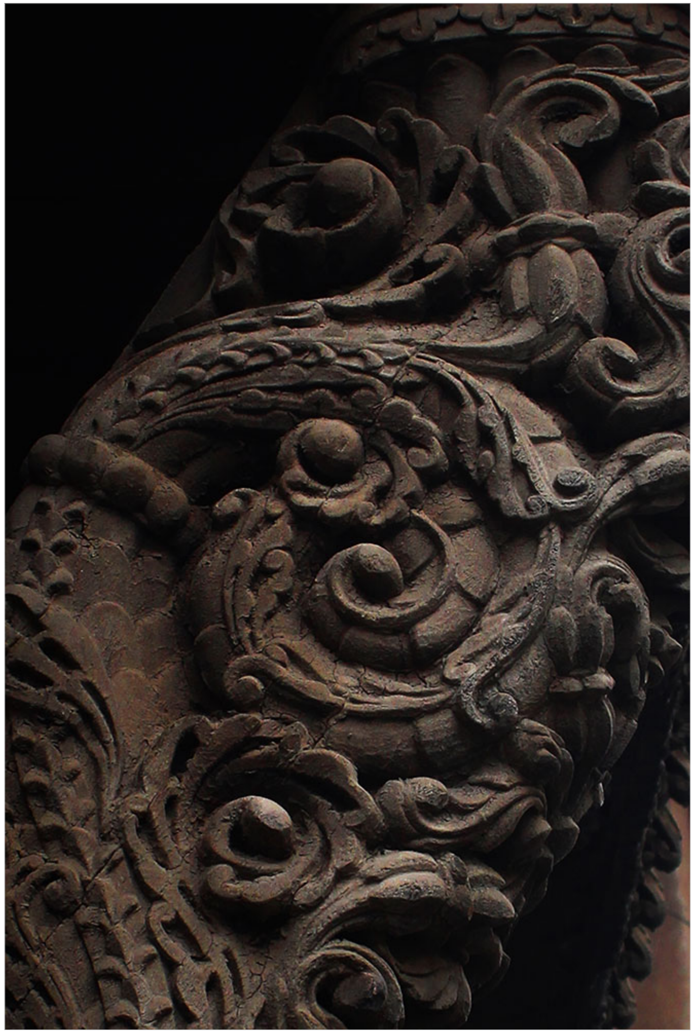

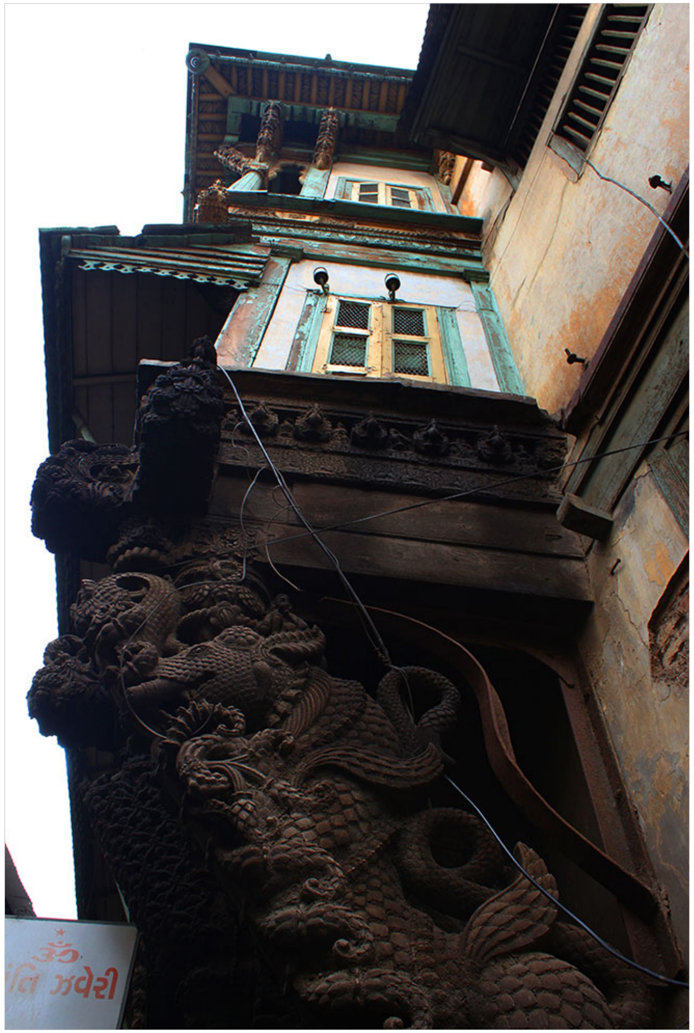

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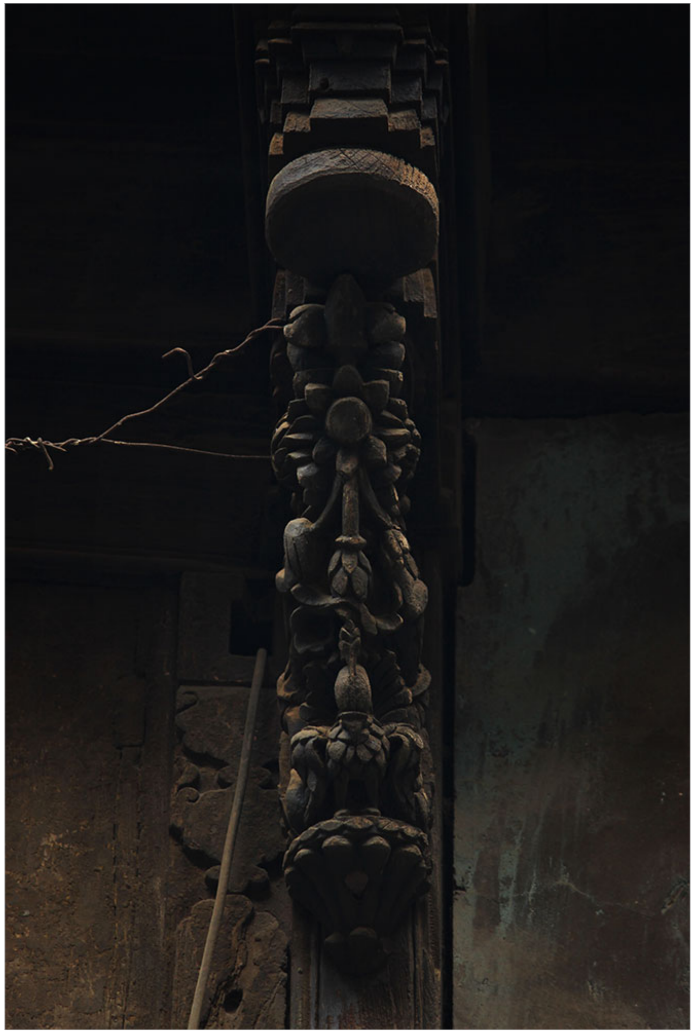

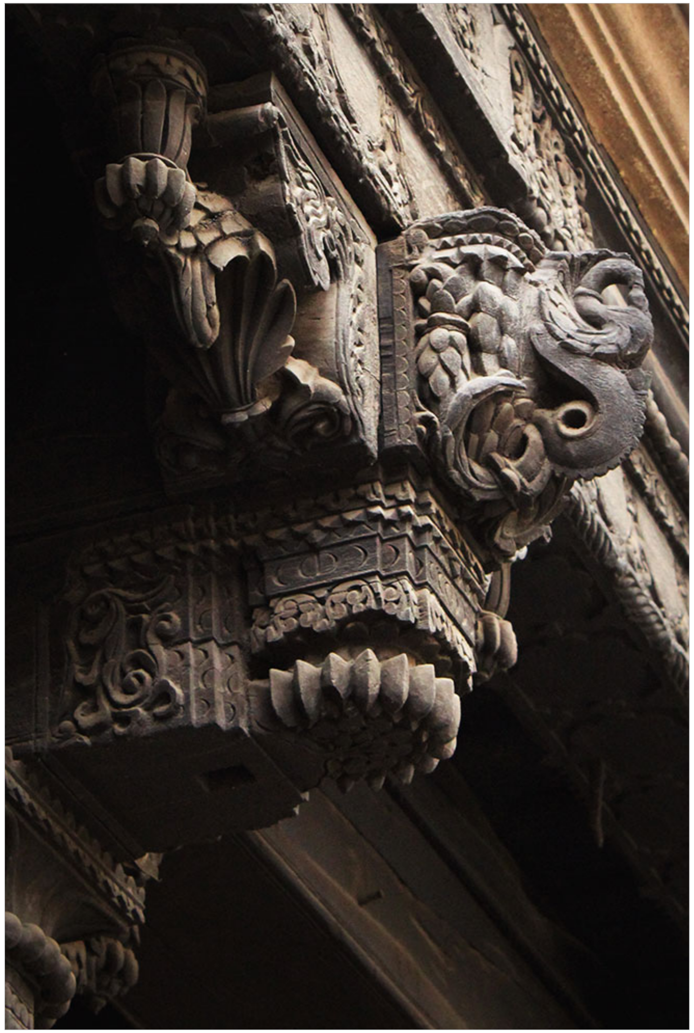

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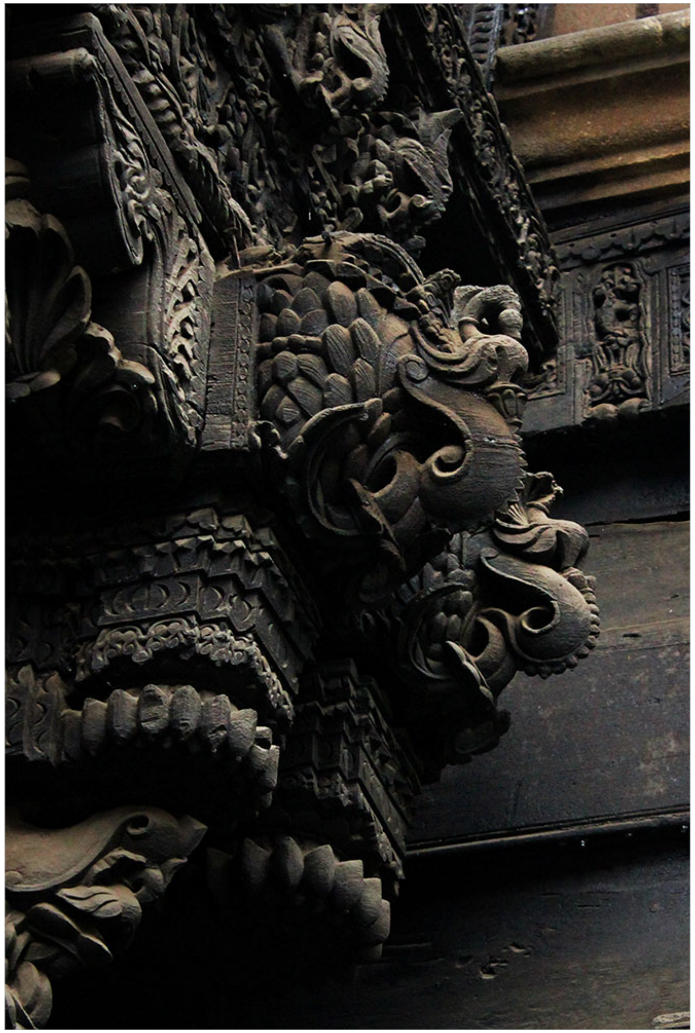

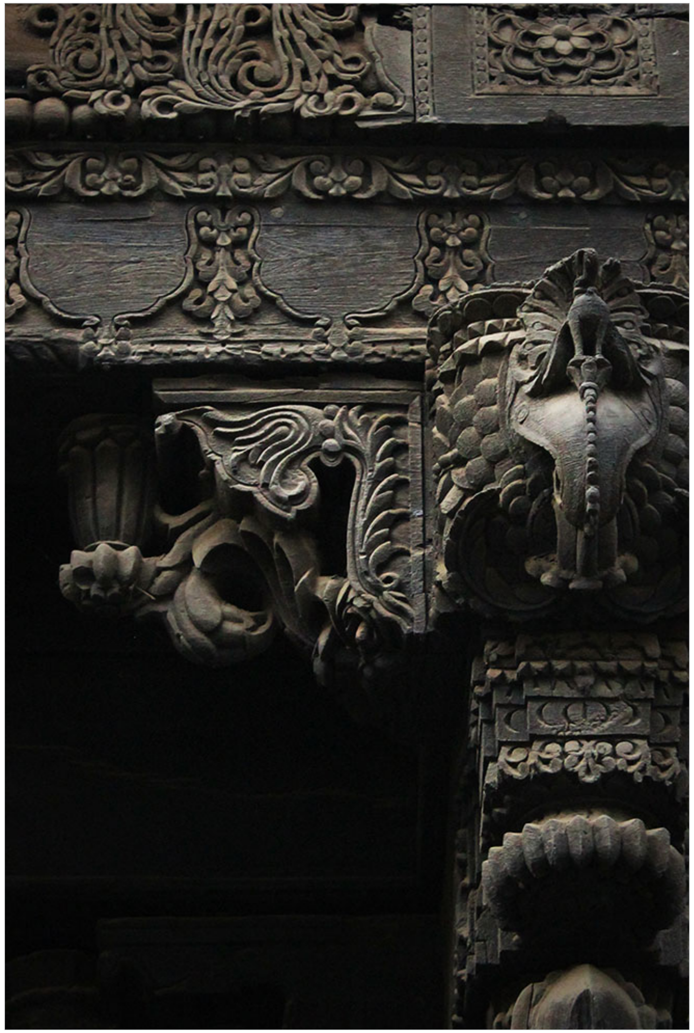

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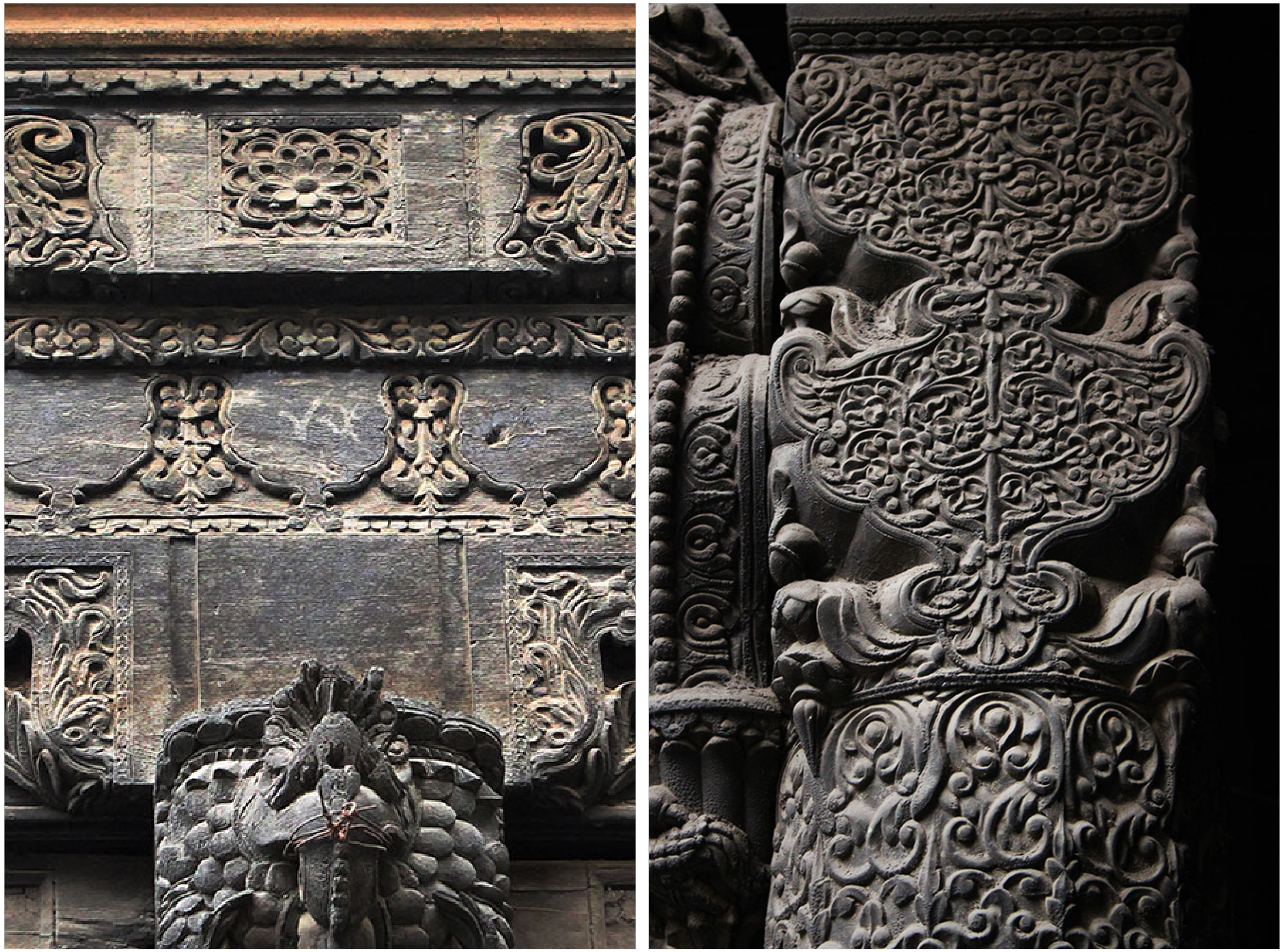

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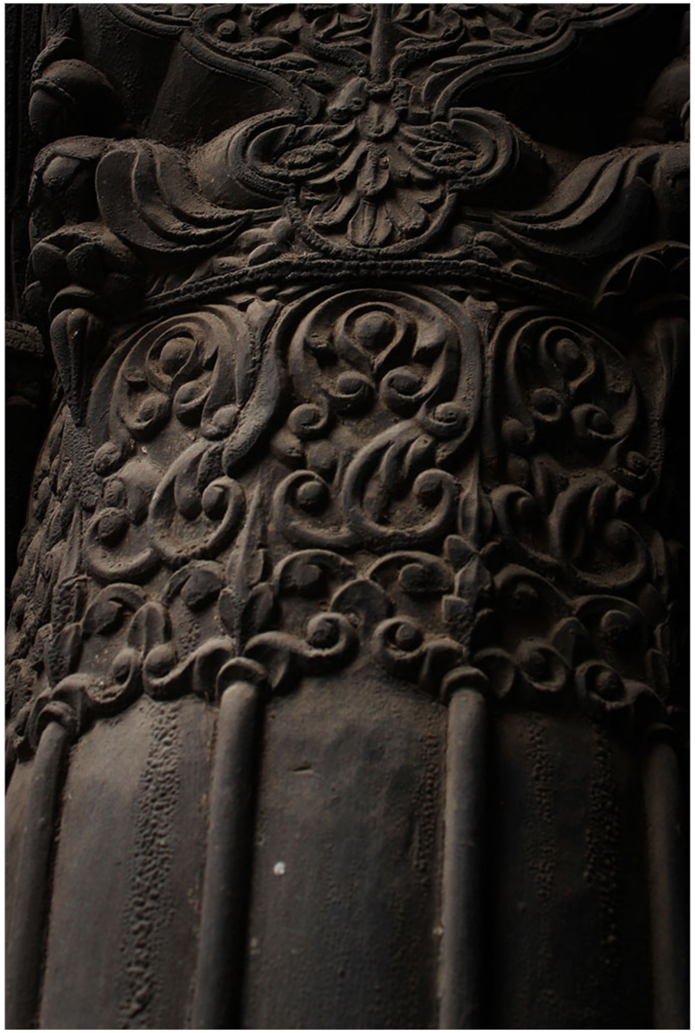

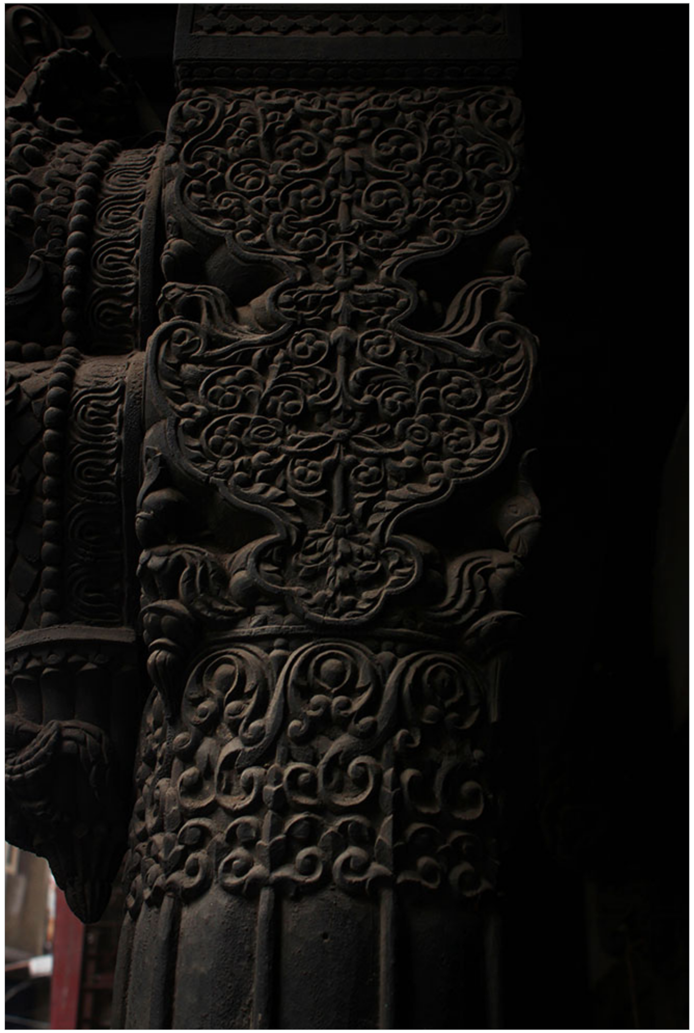

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Karnavati: Deep Rooted Legacy of Architecture

Beauty and Intricacy of old Ahmadabad
by
Sunny Kolekar
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/karnavati-deep-rooted-legacy-architecture/pillars

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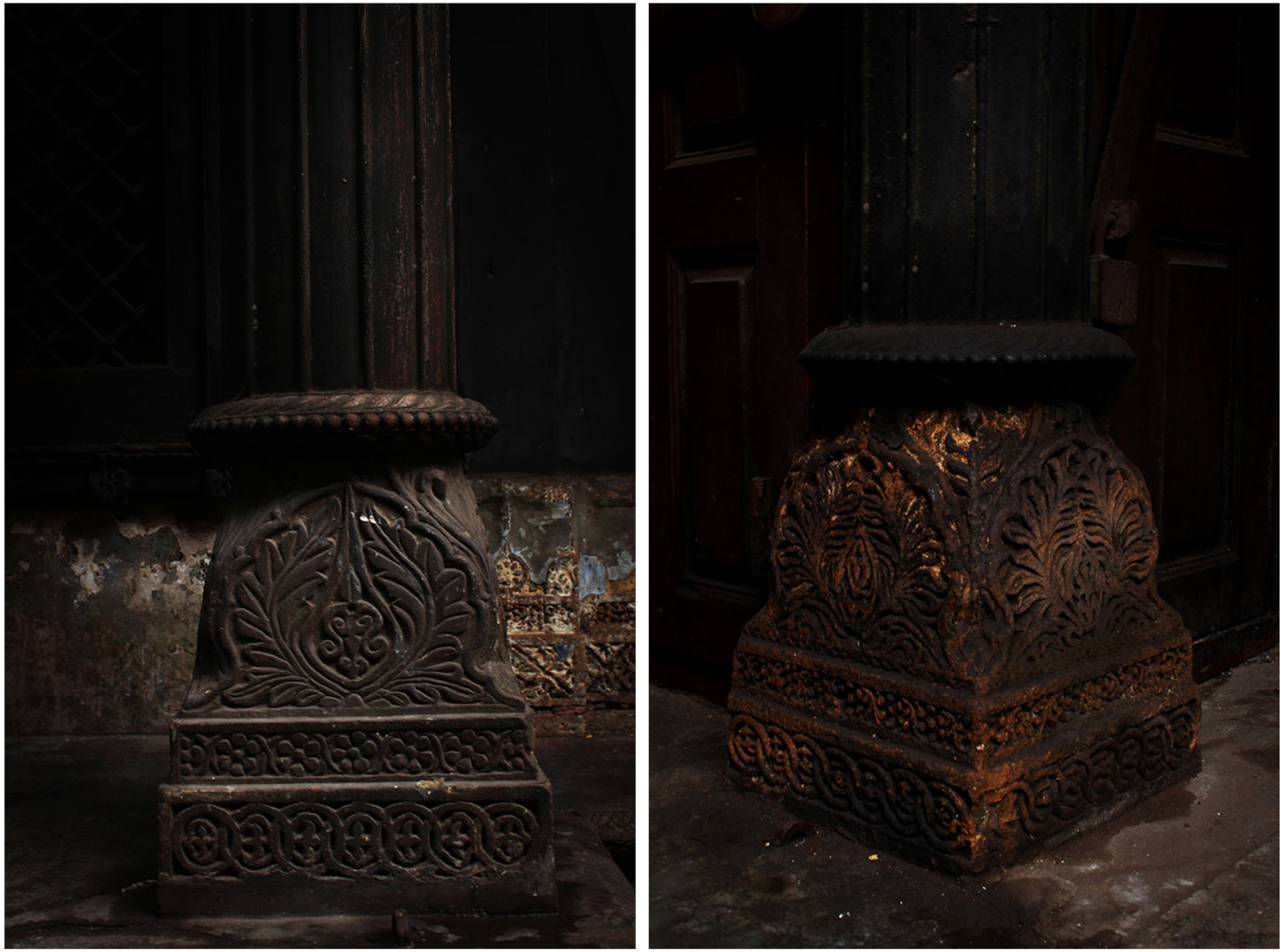

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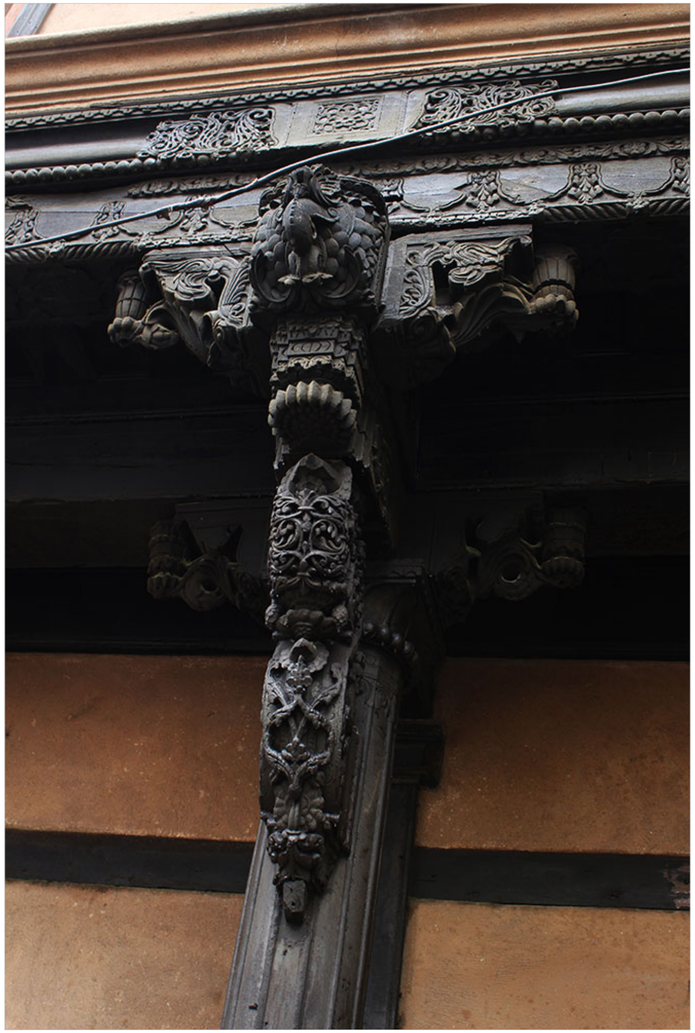

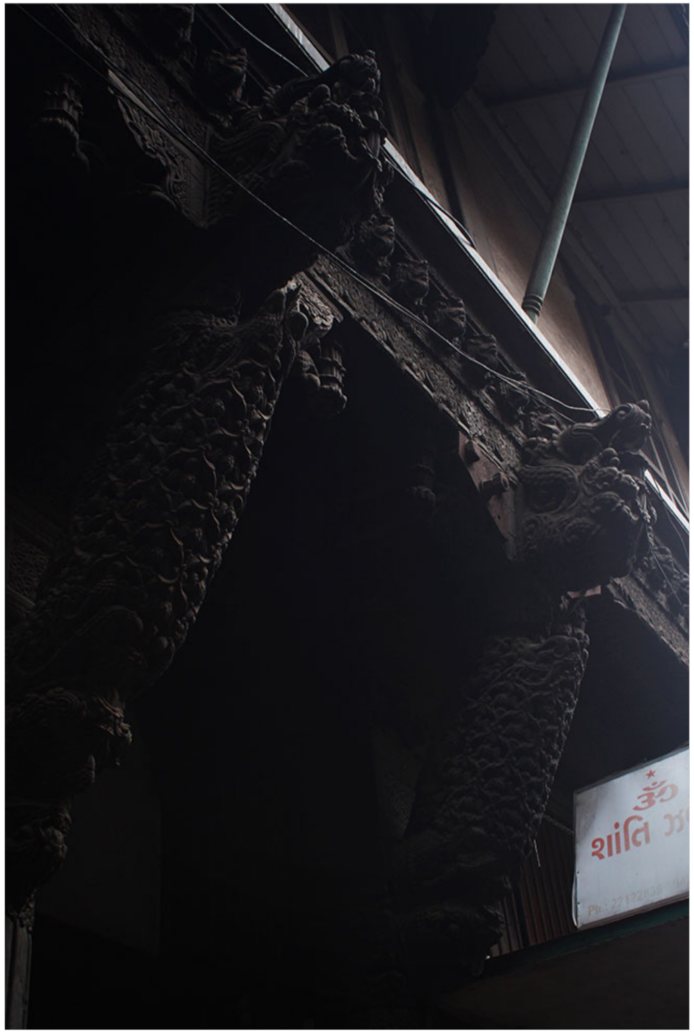

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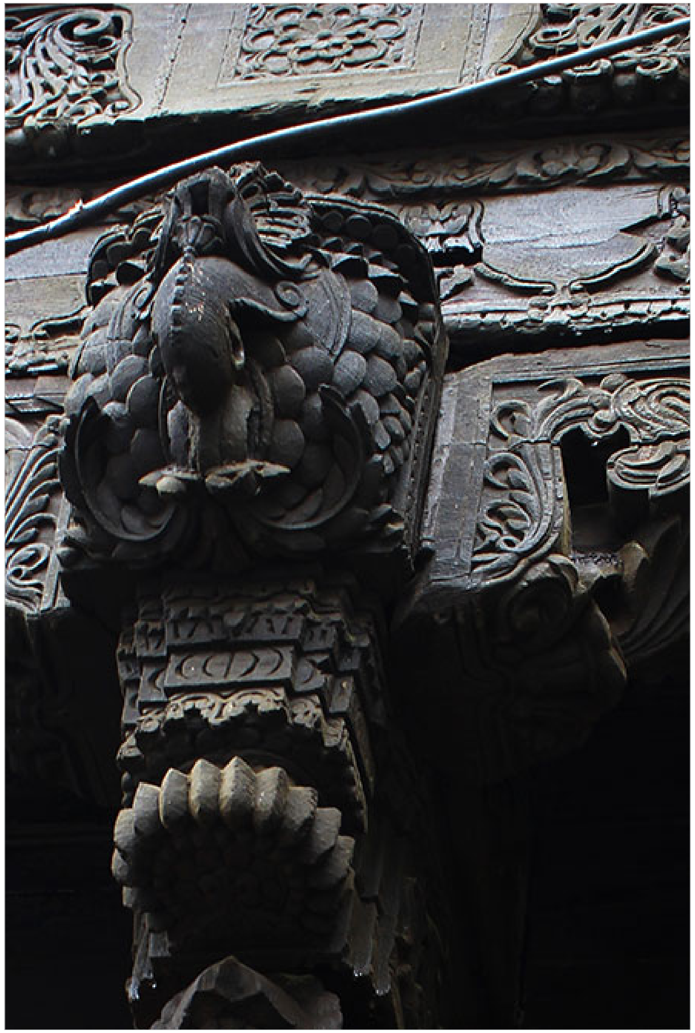

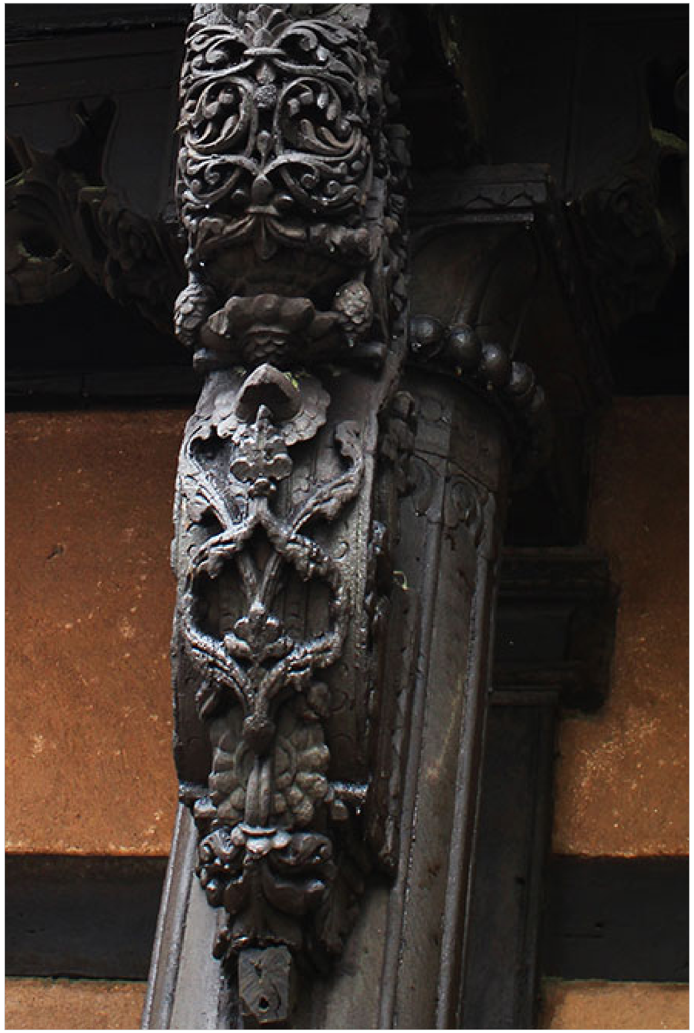

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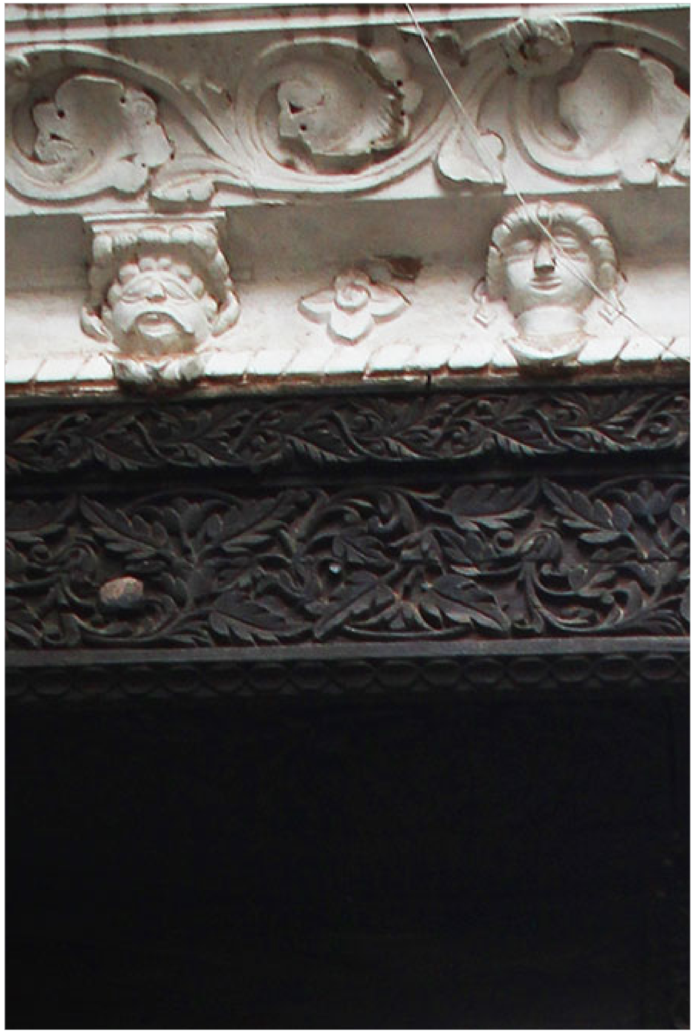

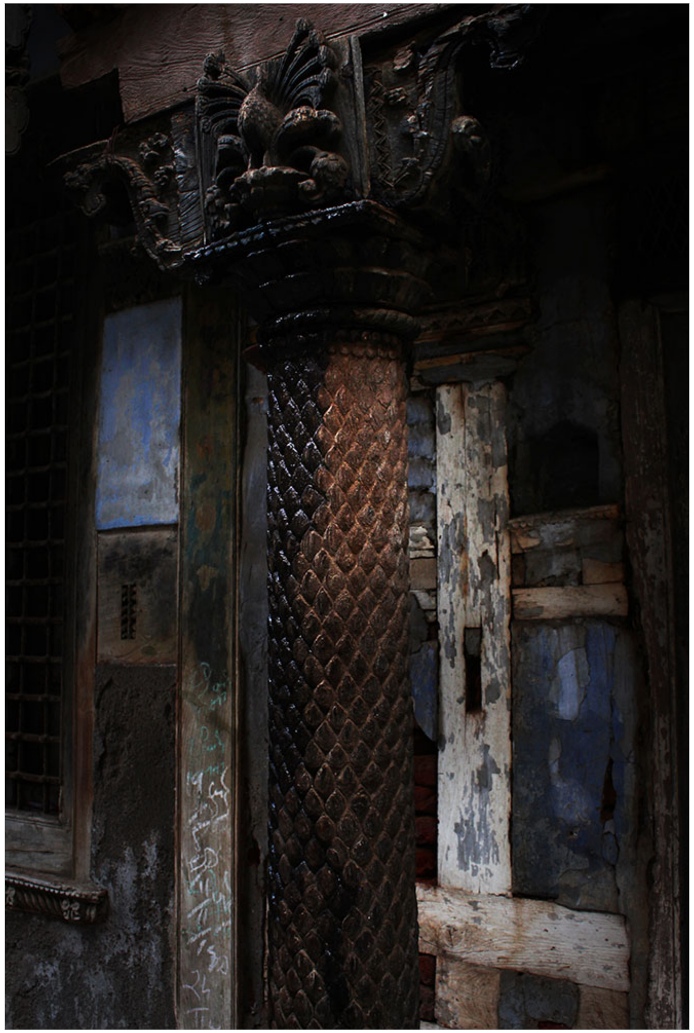

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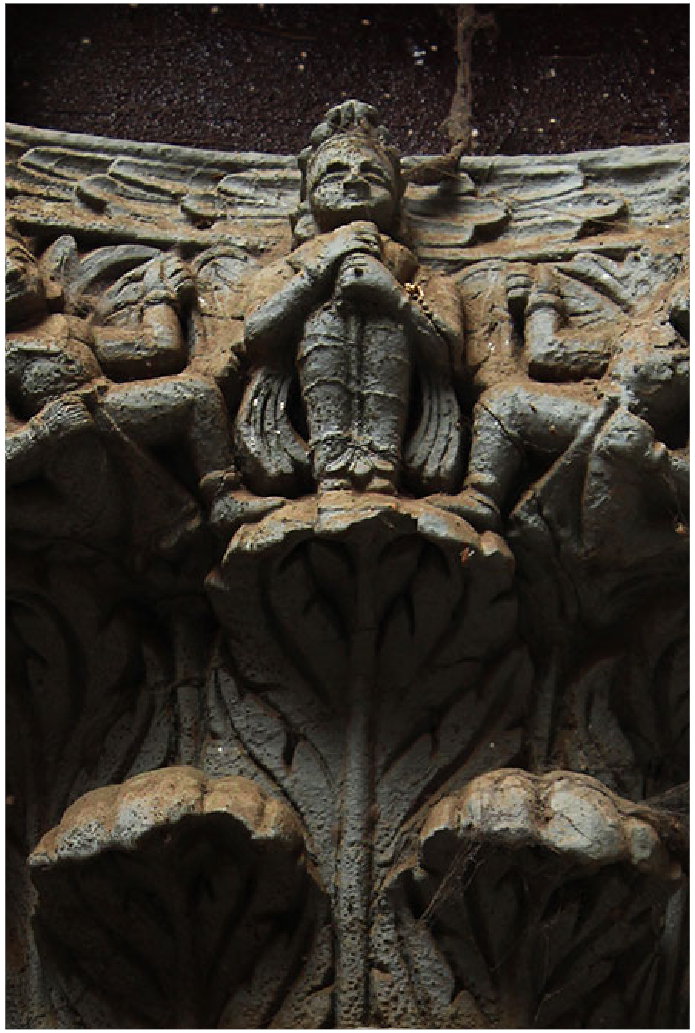

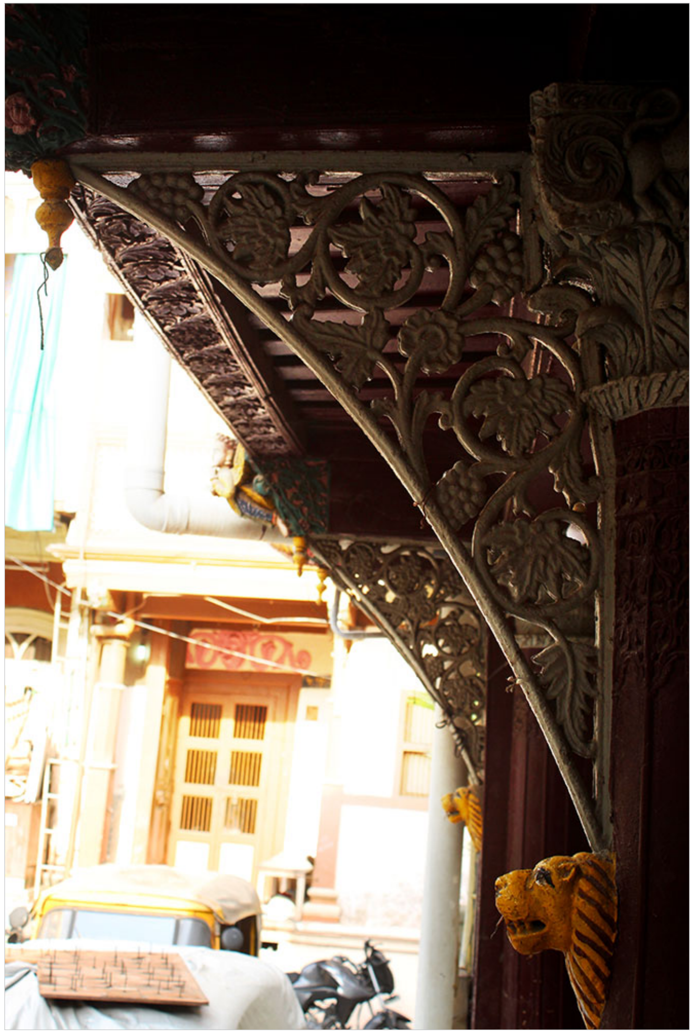

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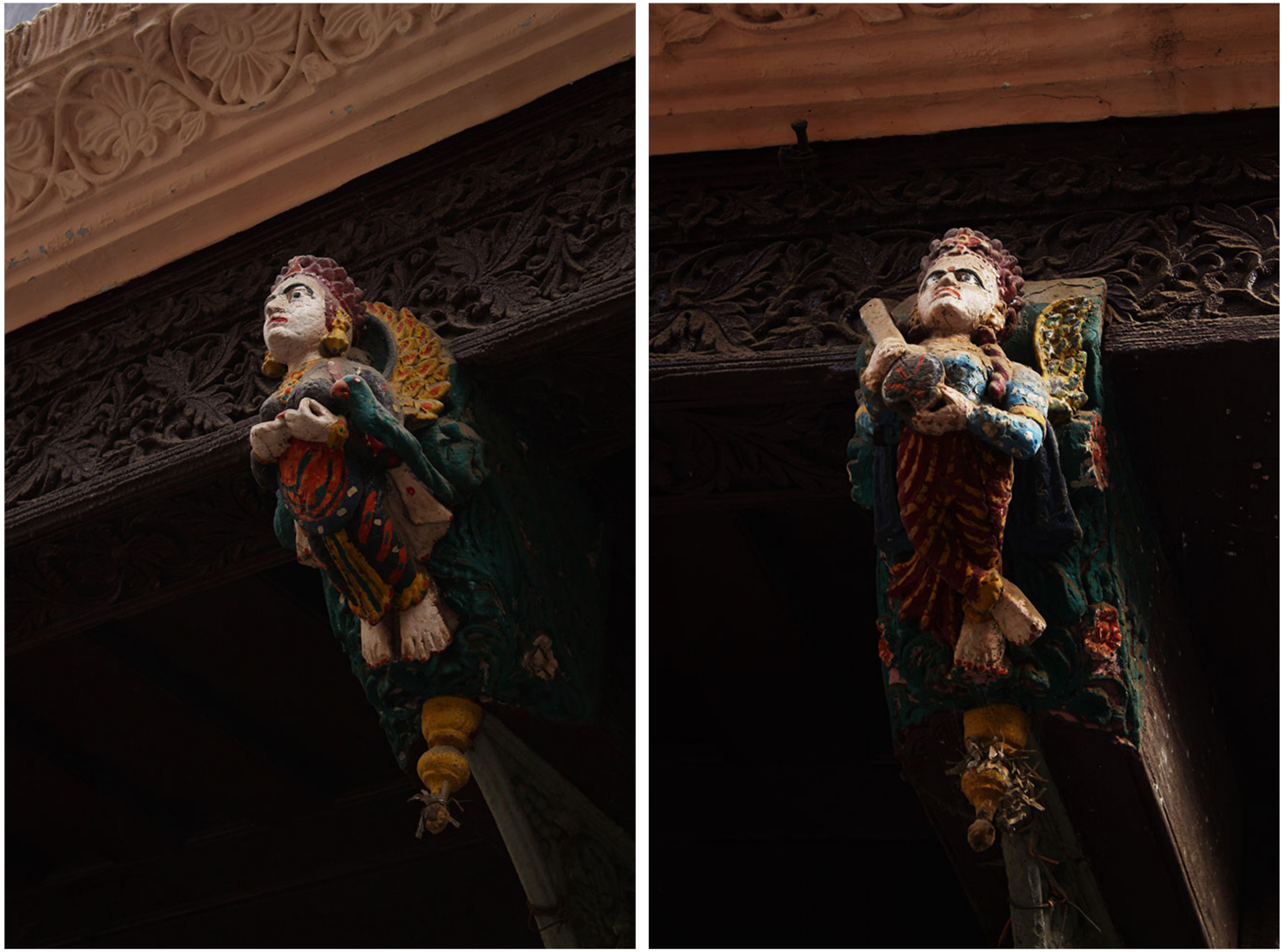

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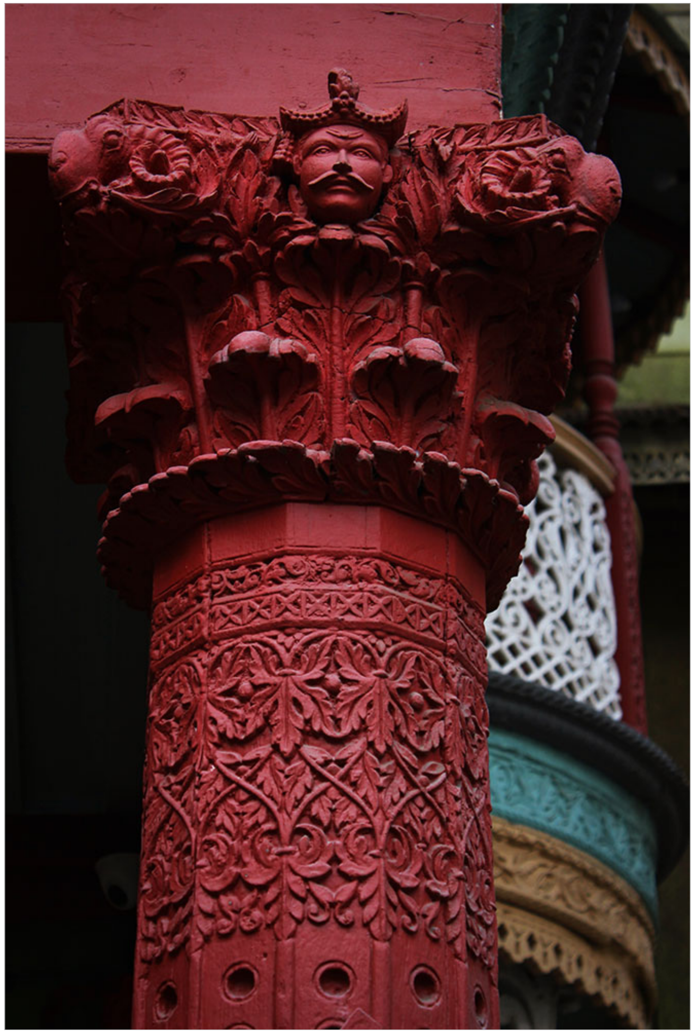

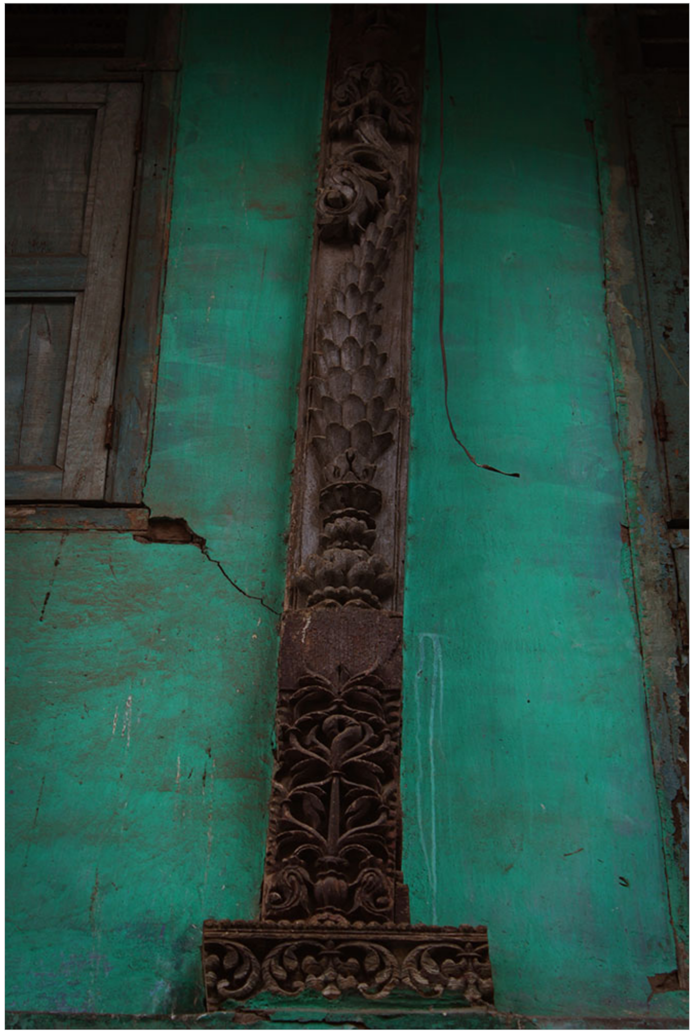

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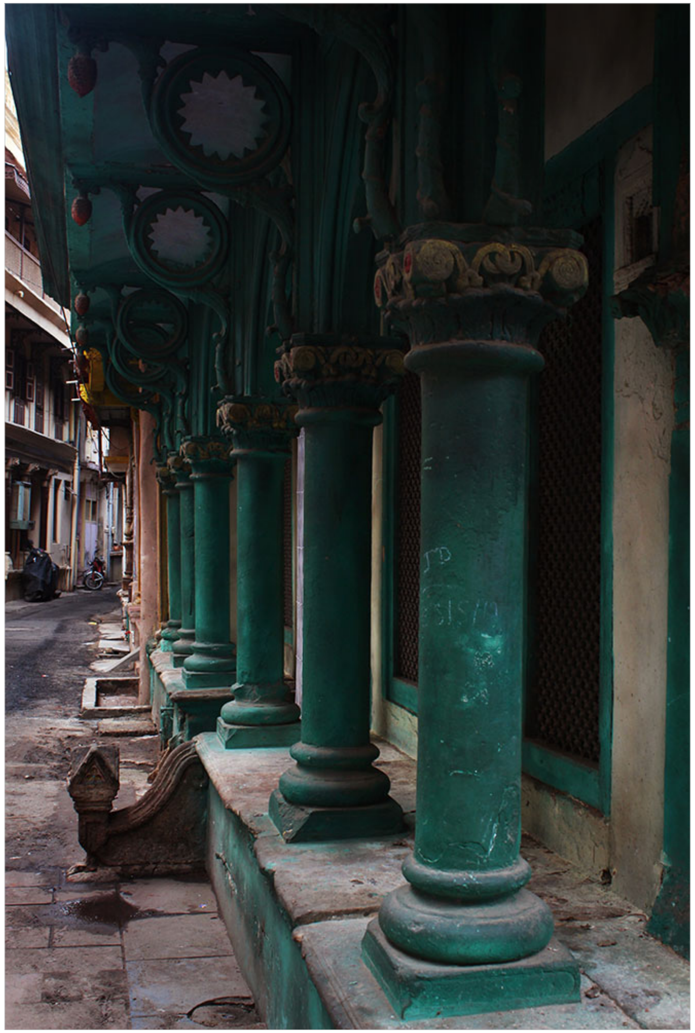

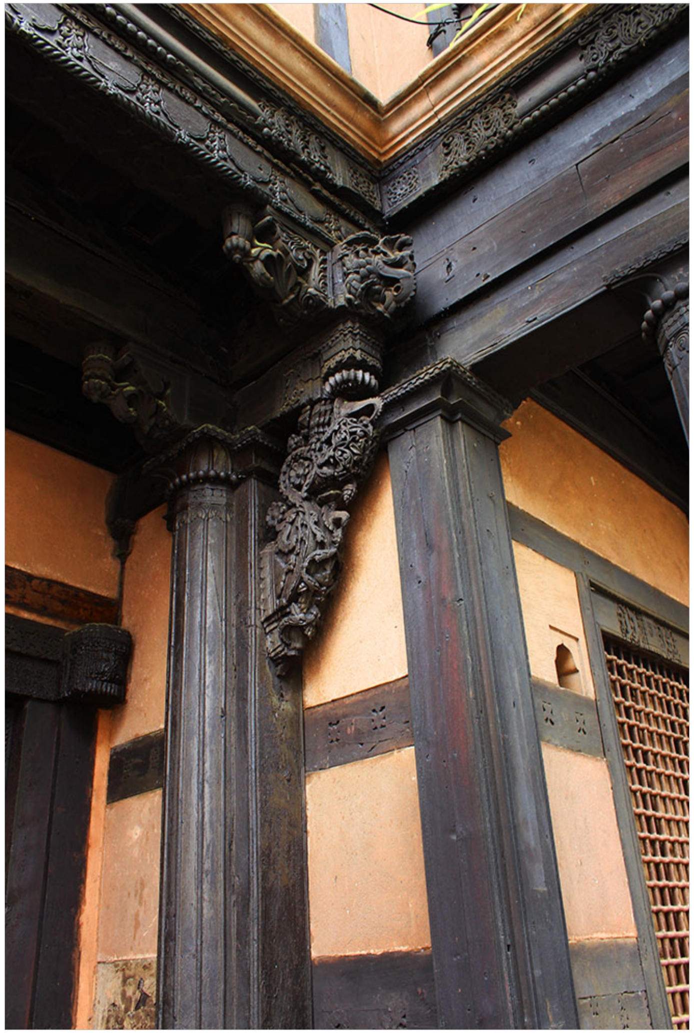

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Temples

Temples: The Dwelling Places of Supreme Power

Humankind never forgot to worship nature and cosmic energies and the dwelling places of supreme power became a center for many social activities. In India, if it’s north or south, east or west, the whole pay special attention to the gods and goddesses. Their residing places of them are considered as the most sacred and divine places. In the olden days, these temples weren’t just a dwelling place for gods and goddesses but also played an inevitable role in socializing the population. Acted as a platform for social gatherings. Indirectly taught the art of seduction and sex through temple carvings, sculptures, and paintings. It used to be the place where dance, music, and art used to get flourished and were cherished.

The old city of Ahmedabad is also having such dwelling places of gods and goddesses and most of the old temples are for Lord Shiva, the main reason behind it must be because these temples were built during the regime of Marathas which are the examples of Slonaki temple architecture. Solanki Architecture in India bears all the features of the architecture of North India. It had mostly flourished in the state of Gujarat. At the same time it also closely resembled the Rajasthani style of architecture. The essential features of Solanki Architecture are a closed hall and a porch that is connected both internally and externally. The walls of the Solanki temples represent a beautiful shade of light and dark. Beautifully hand-carved marble work on the walls will keep anyone wonderstruck. The shikhara or the roofs of the temples are made of different levels which are adorned with little cute and beautiful human figures. The Garbha Gruha and the mandapa are always connected with beautiful hand-carved pillars which are again flooded with intricate motifs. The entrances of the temples are having stone-carved Torans or Toranas and the temples are always east facing. These temples were built with very advanced technologies and today’s world isn’t having the knowledge to renovate and reconstruct them, due to this reason, many of the temples have lost their unique specialities. Each architectural creations will someone in deep thinking, how did the artisans make these stunning creations when there were no electricity and computers.

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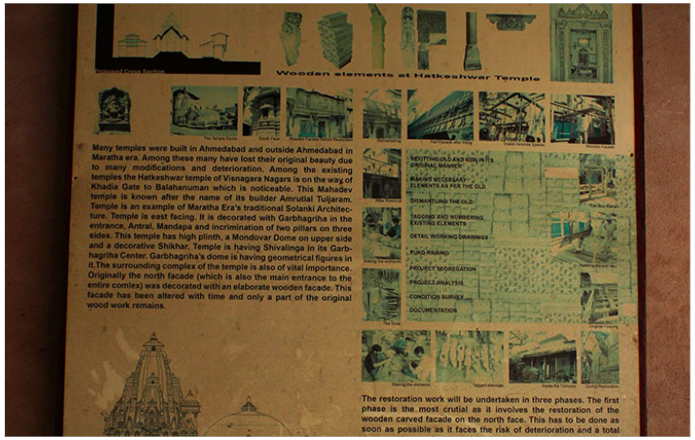
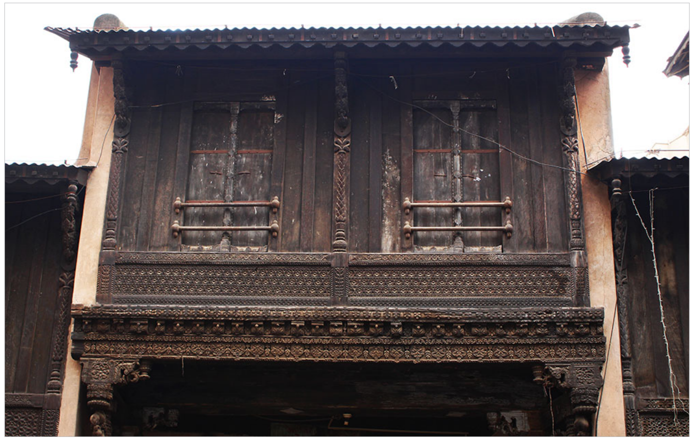


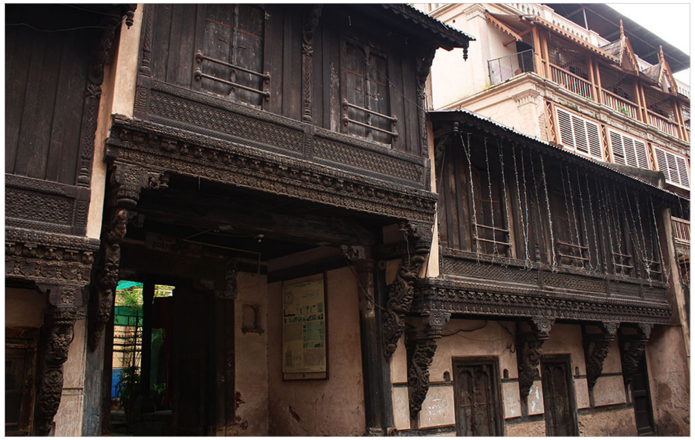
Wooden elements at Hatkeshwar Temple

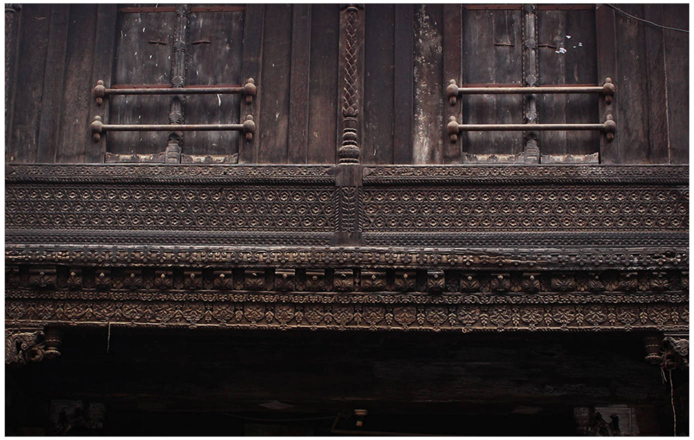
Many temples were built in Ahmedabad and outside Ahmedabad in Maratha era. Among these many have lost their original beauty due to many modifications and deterioration. Among the existing temples the Hatkeshwar temple of Visnagara Nagars is on the way of Khadia Gate to Balahanuman which is noticeable. This Mahadev temple is known after the name of its builder Amrutlal Tuljaram. Temple is an example of Maratha Era's traditional Solanki Architecture. Temple is east facing. It is decorated with Garbhagriha in the entrance, Antral, Mandapa and incrimination of two pillars on three sides. This temple has high plinth, a Mondovar Dome on upper side and a decorative Shikhar. Temple is having Shivalinga in its Garbhagriha Center. Garbhagriha's dome is having geometrical figures in it.The surrounding complex of the temple is also of vital importance. Originally the north facade (which is also the main entrance to the entire comlex) was decorated with an elaborate wooden facade. This facade has been altered with time and only a part of the original wood work remains.

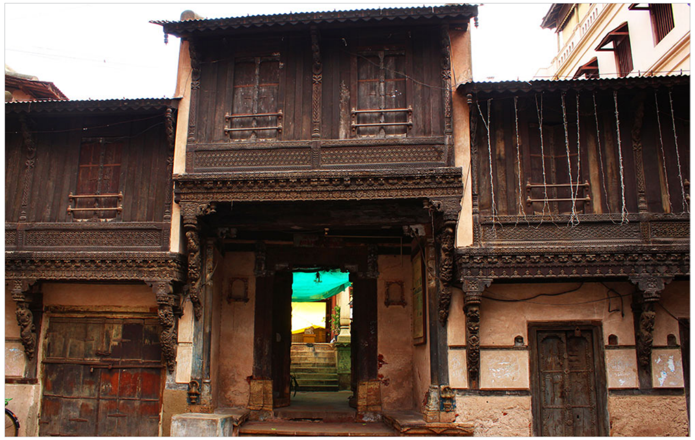
REFITTING OLD AND NEW IN ITS ORIGINAL MANNER
MAKING NECESSARY ELEMENTS AS PER THE OLD
DISMANTLING THE OLD
TAGGING AND NUMBERING EXISTING ELEMENTS
DETAIL WORKING DRAWINGS
FUND RAISING
PROJECT SEGREGATION
PROJECT ANALYSIS
CONDITION SURVEY
DOCUMENTATION

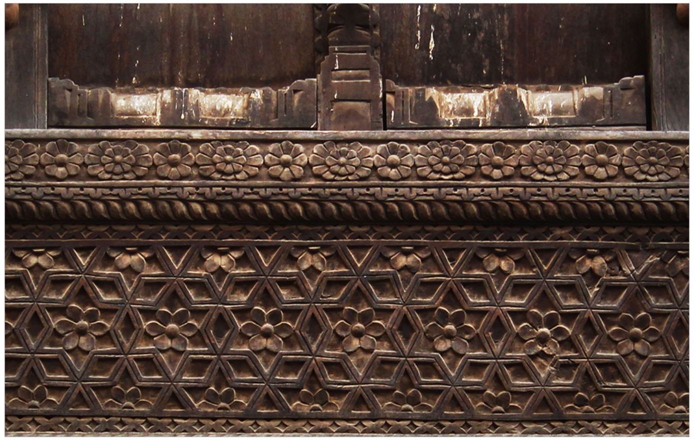
The restoration work will be undertaken in three phases. The first phase is the most crutial as it involves the restoration of the wooden carved facade on the north face. This has to be done as soon as possible as it faces the risk of deterioration and a total











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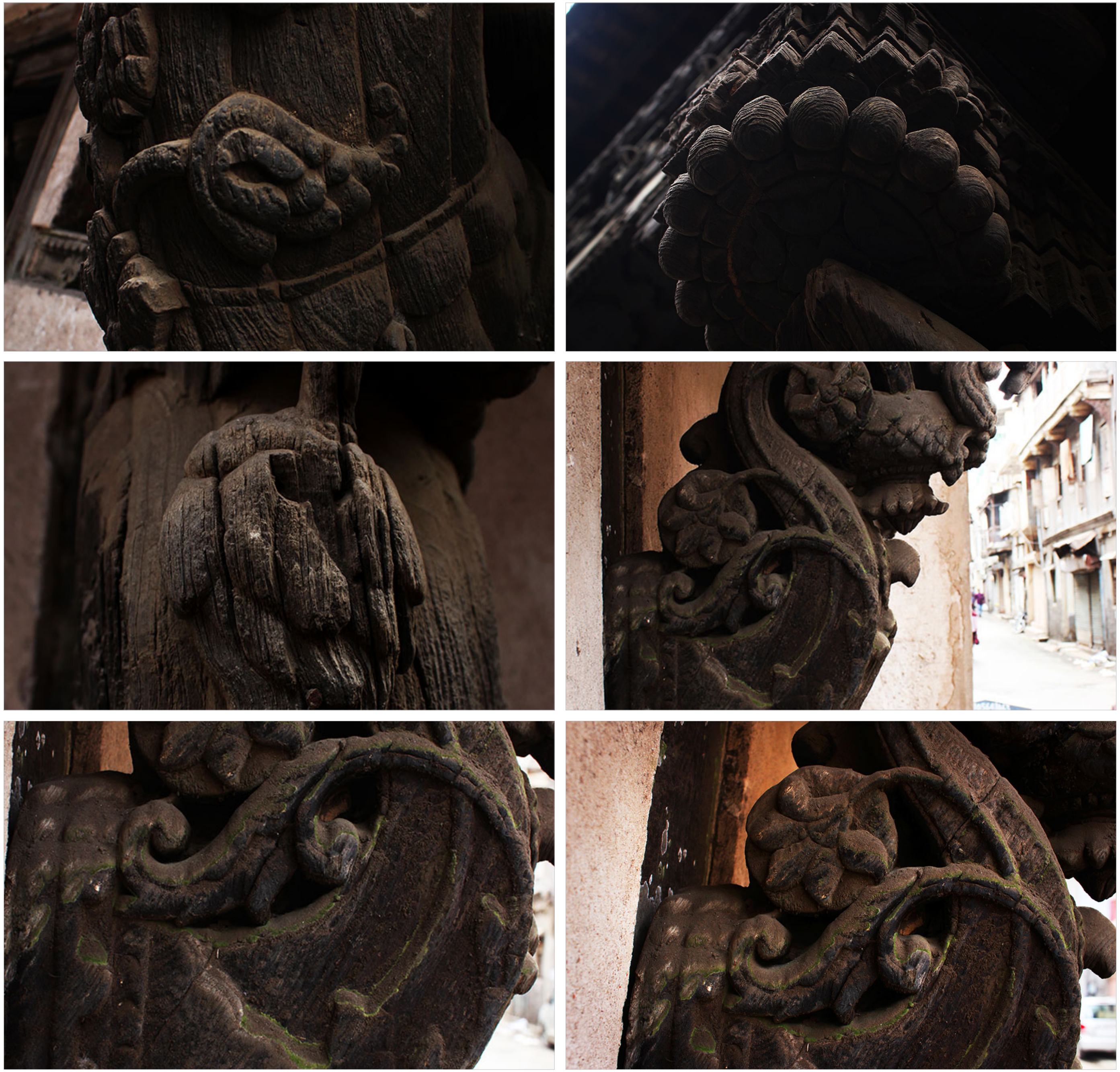

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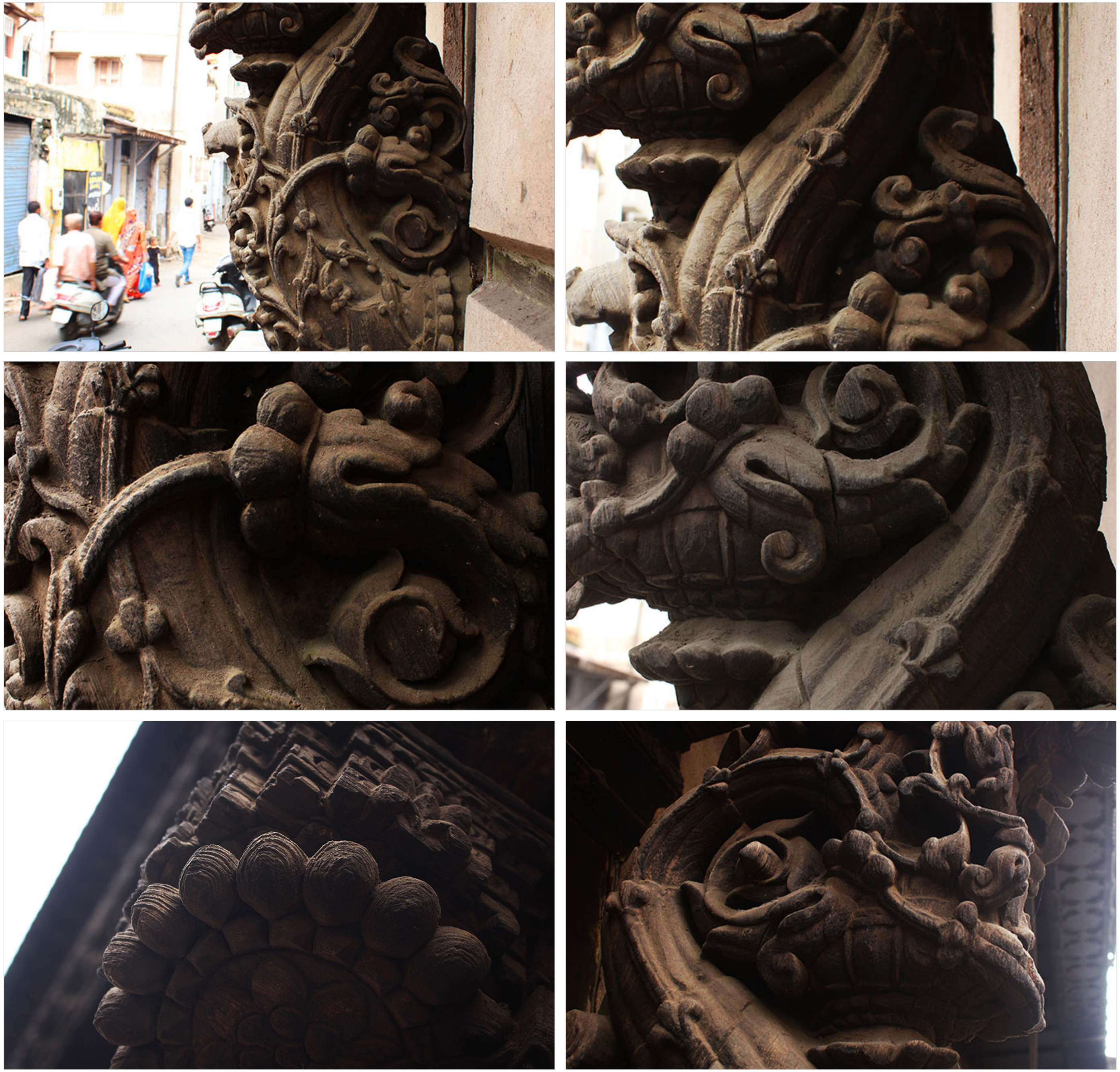

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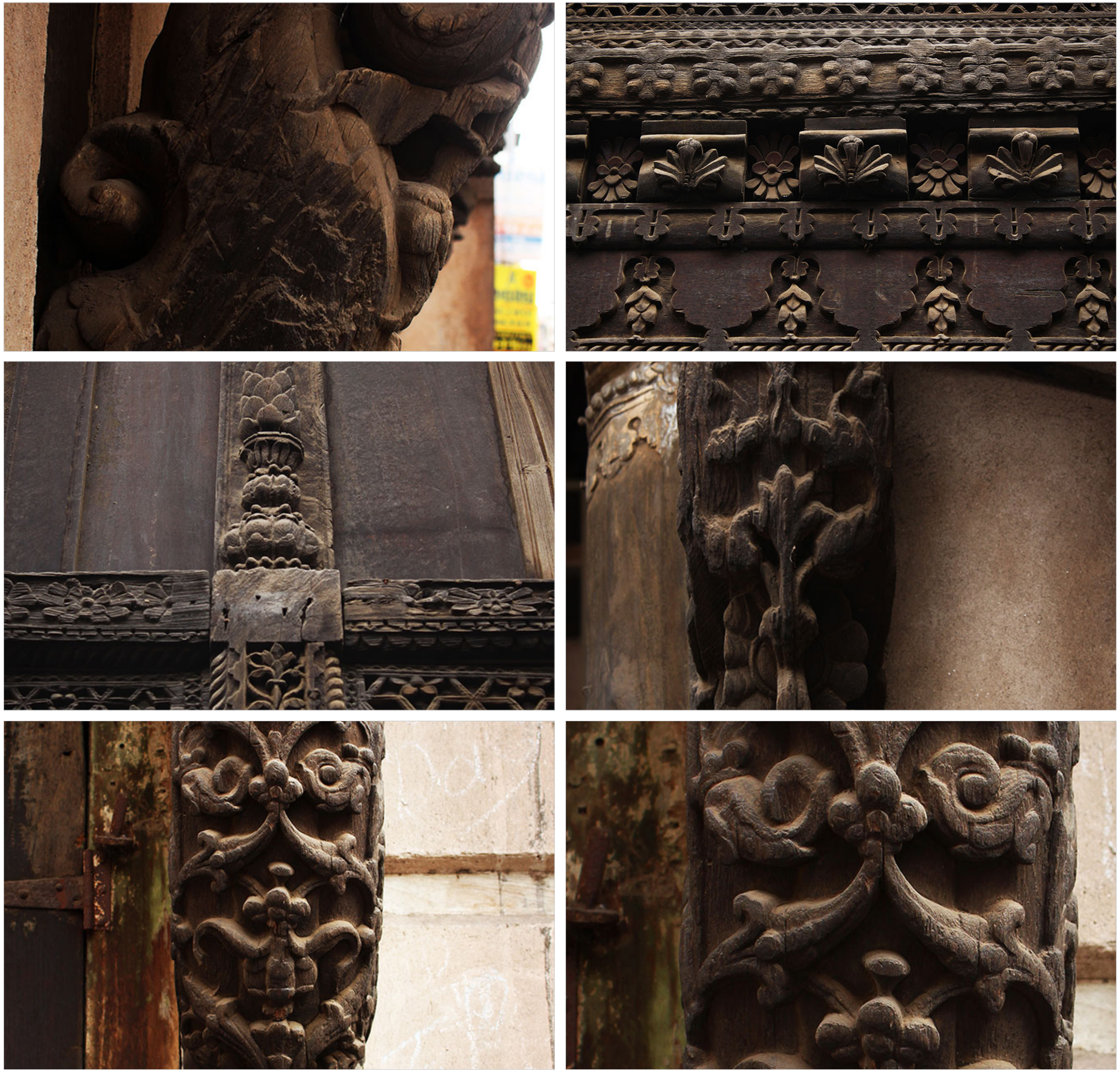

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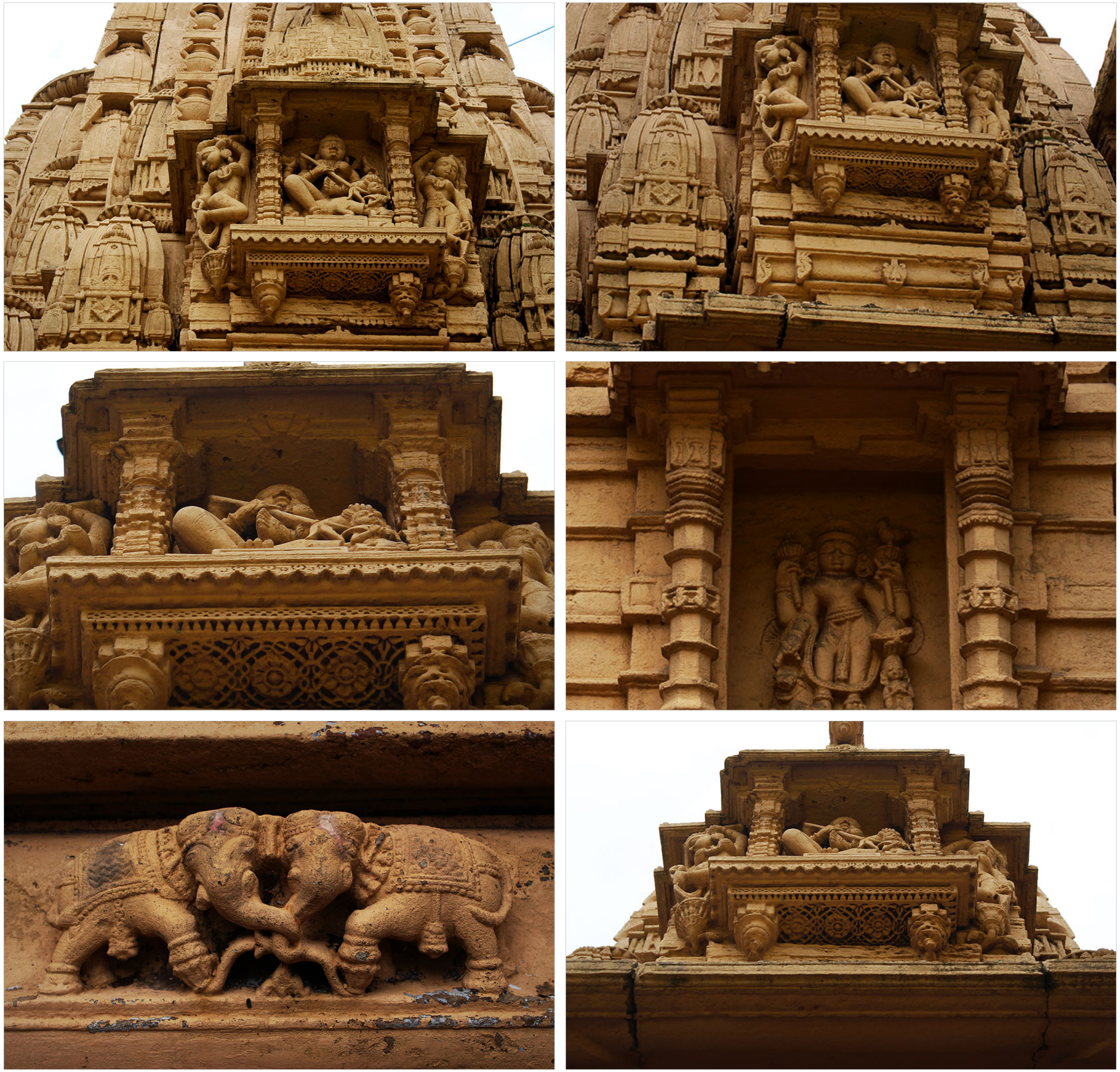

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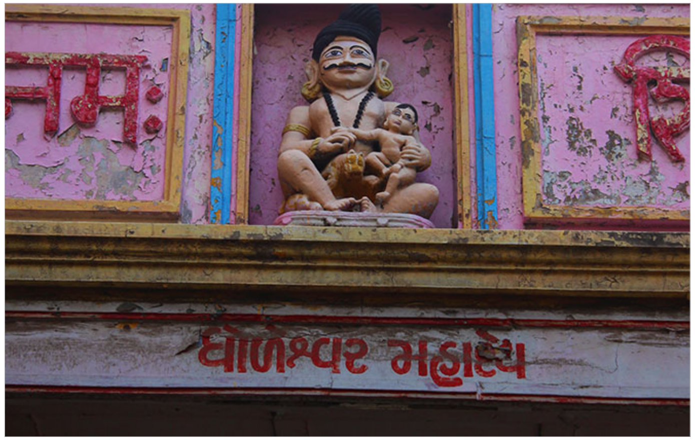

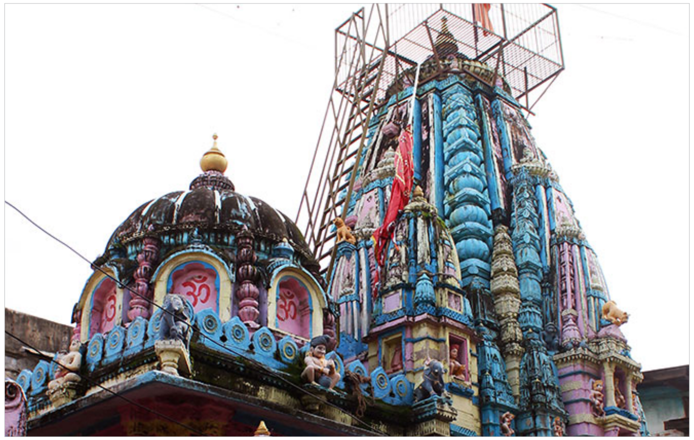

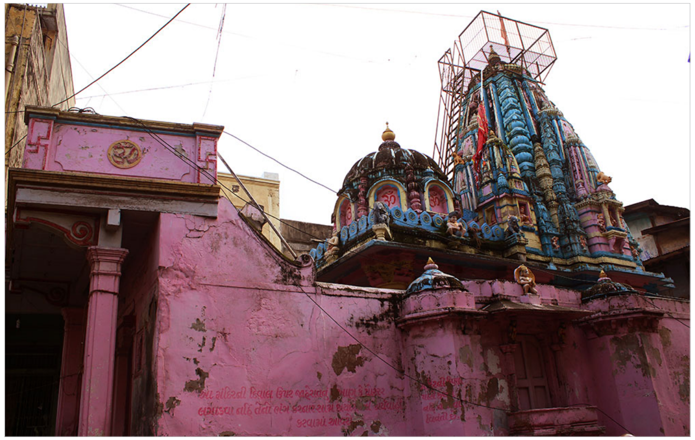

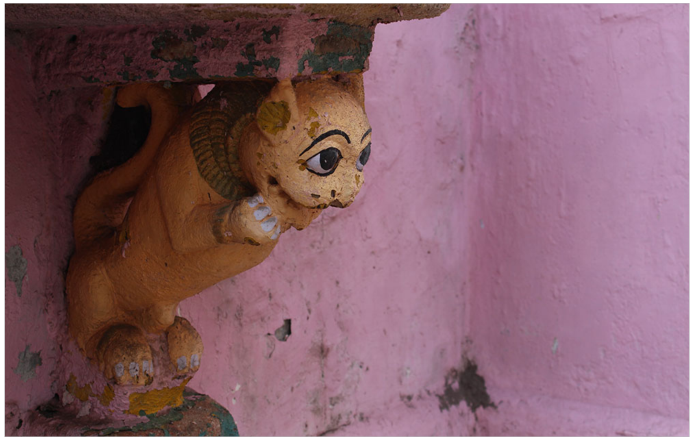

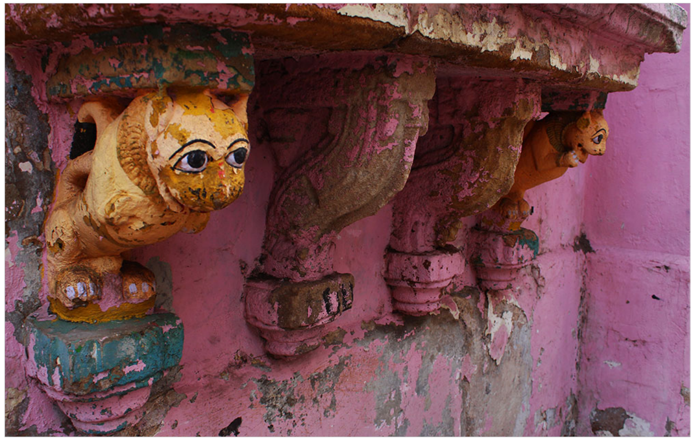

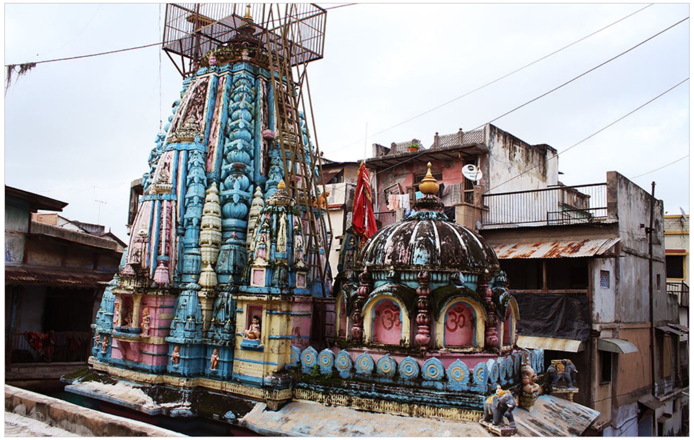

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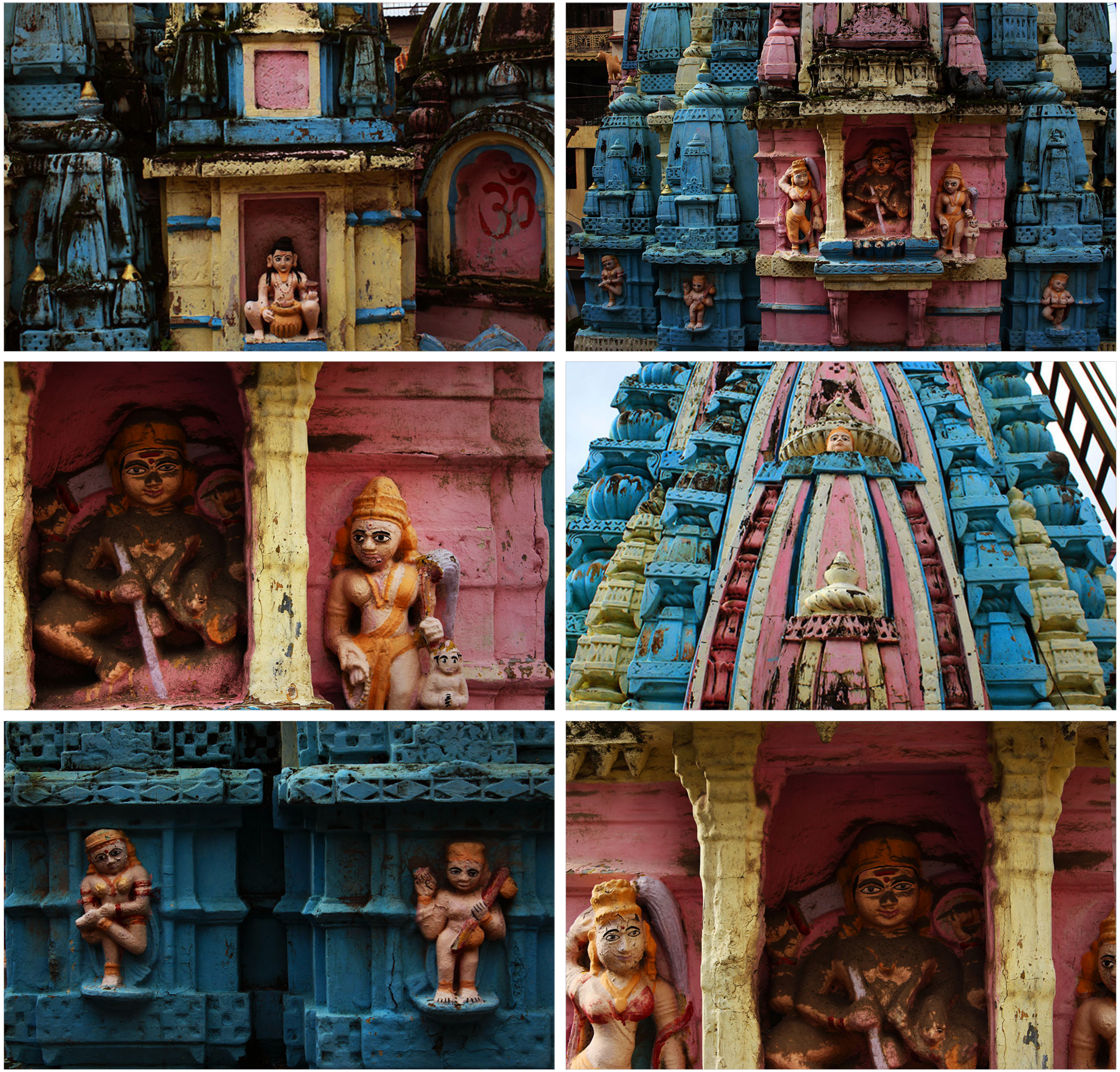

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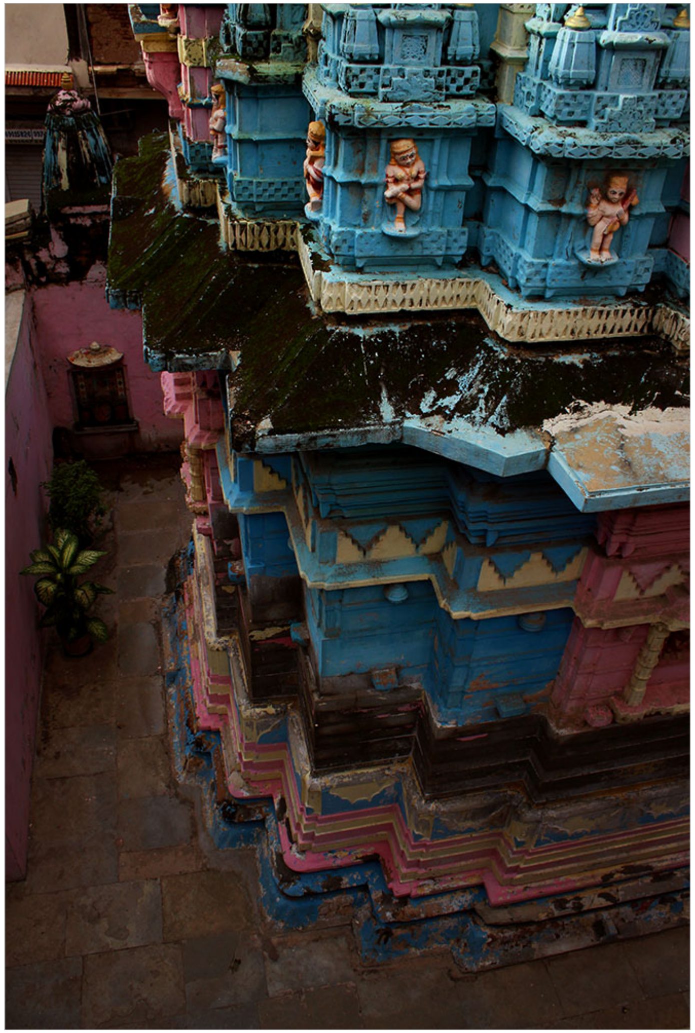

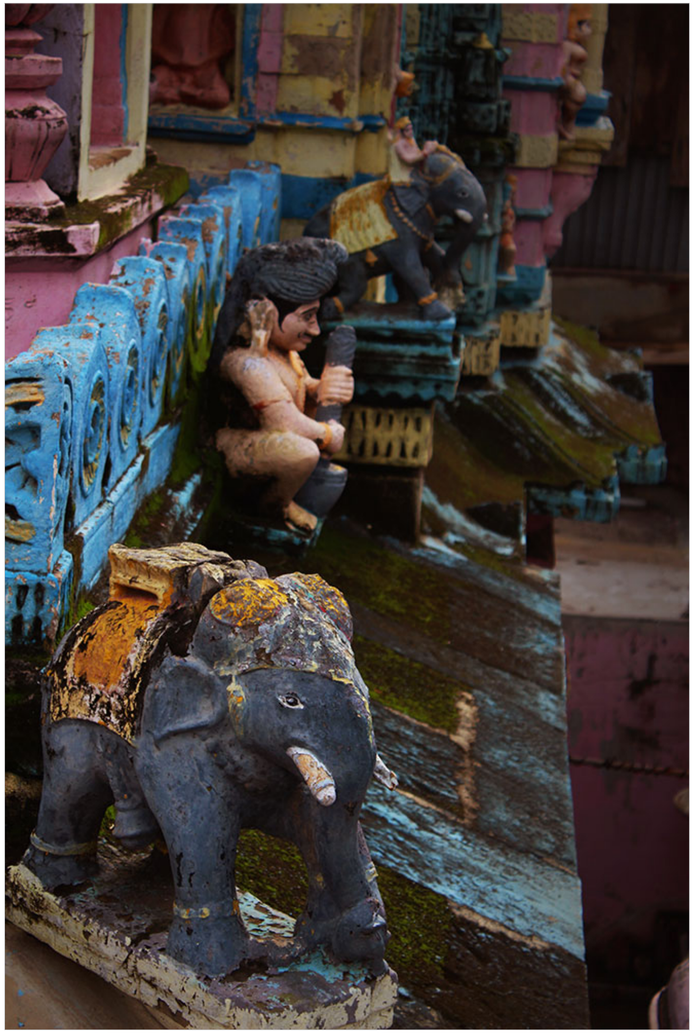

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Karnavati: Deep Rooted Legacy of Architecture

Beauty and Intricacy of old Ahmadabad

by
Sunny Kolekar
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/karnavati-deep-rooted-legacy-architecture/temples

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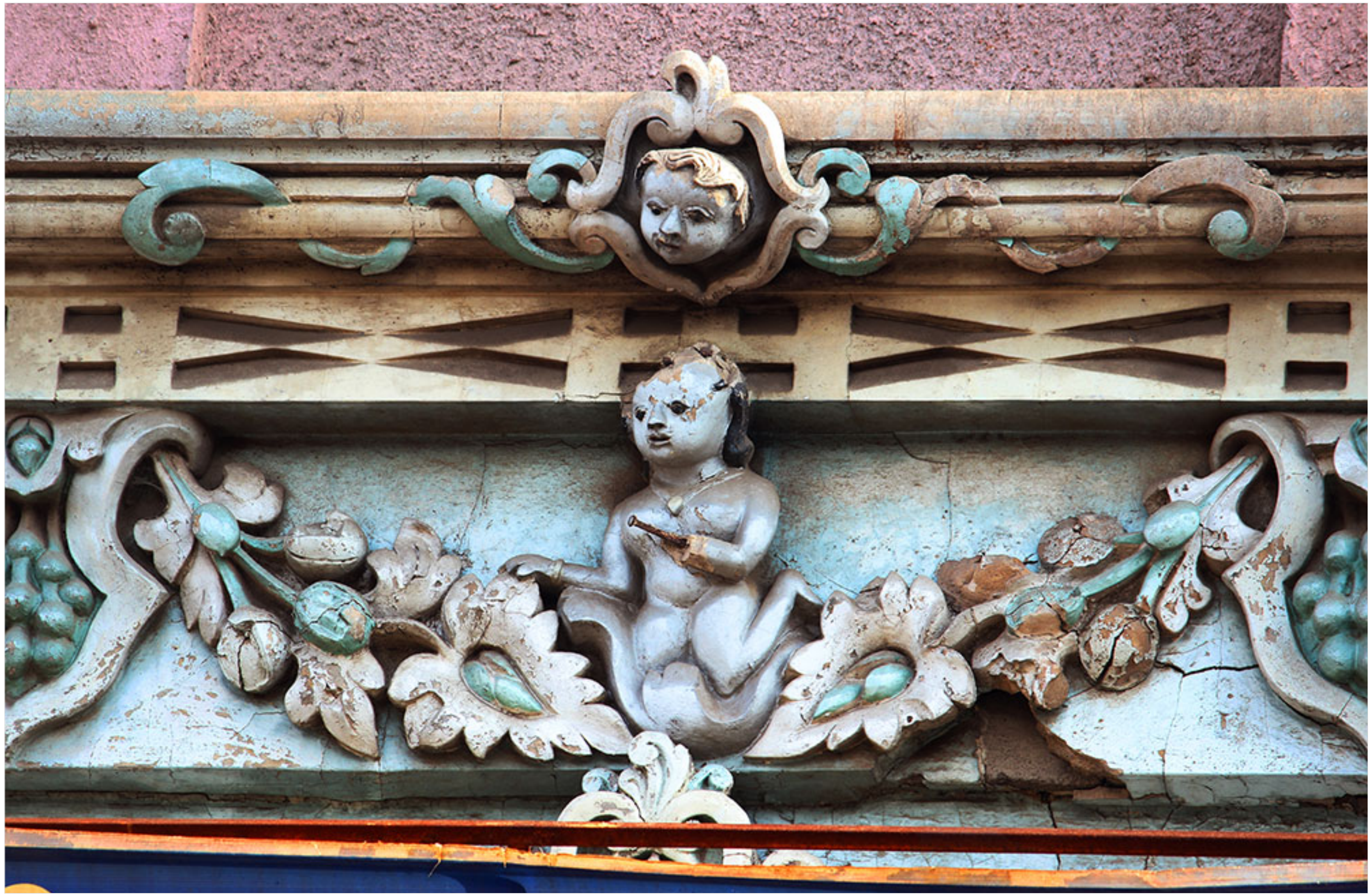
Victorian

Victorian: West meets East

Colonialism had an impact on each and everything in India, the remains of Colonial rules are still alive in the villages and towns of India. When the west reached India, it wasn't just the British but also Dutch, Portuguese, and the French who made their presence felt through their buildings but it was the English who had a lasting impact on the architecture of India. In Ahmedabad, the reach of colonial era can be seen even in the lanes and small houses. The colored Belgium glass windows, human figures, human figures in western outfits, angels along with floral designs can be seen in buildings. The architecture style wasn't purely Victorian but it was an amalgamation of the Victorian and Indian schools of architecture.



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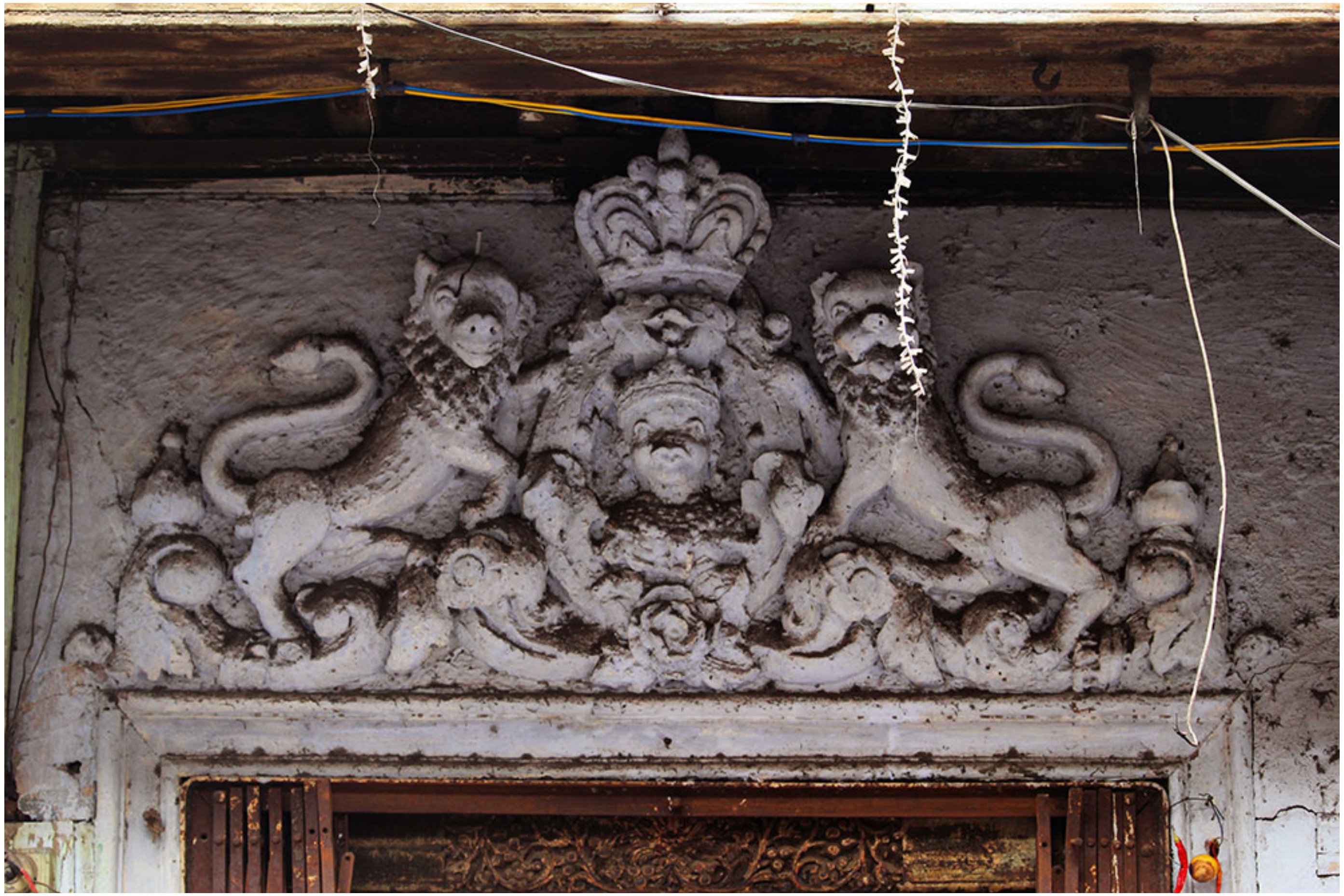

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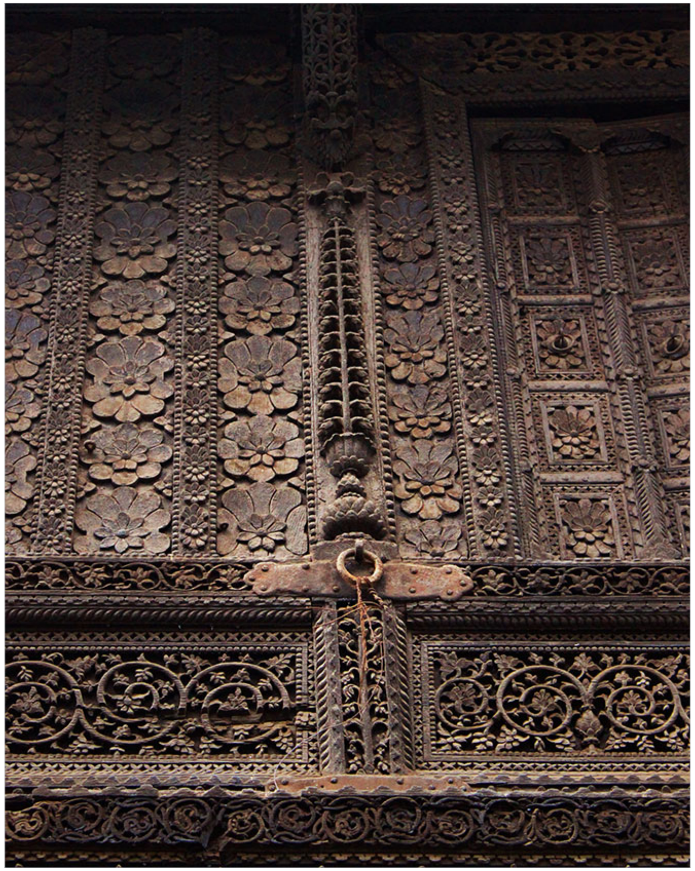
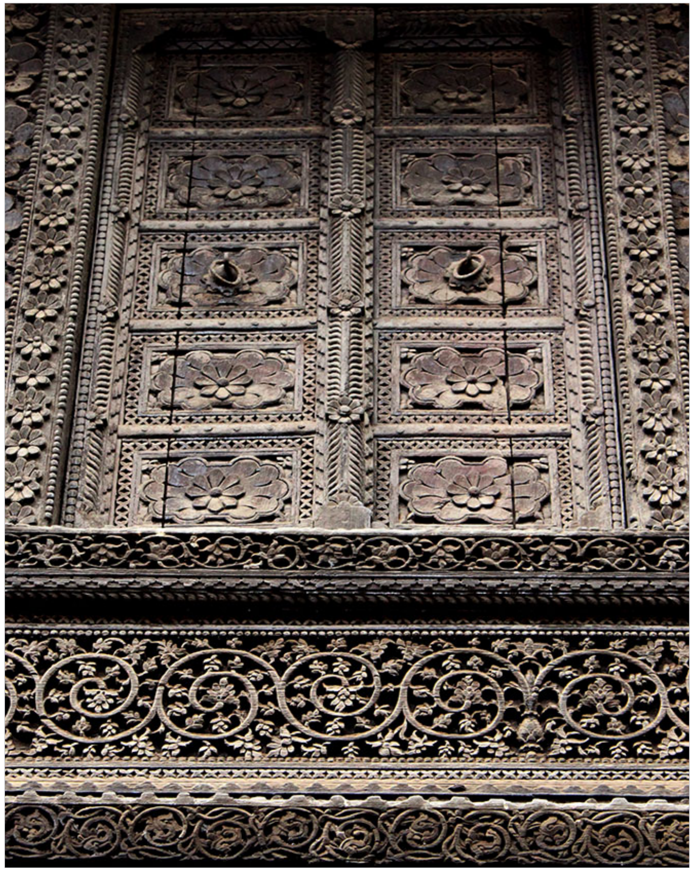
Windows

The huge big window frames, when you walk through the lanes of pols that’s what strikes your eyes, two eyes must be looking at you from inside. At some windows, you will get to see clothes are kept for drying and at some windows are at their old age. Some are still in their youth. The windows of the pol houses are made of huge wooden frames some are decorated with engraved detailing. But most of the windows follow a very simple design format same as the doors and door frames. In some places, you will get to see the Victorian influence on windows. Textured Belgium glass doors. The difference between a traditional Haveli window and a colonial influenced one is clearly visible in its structure and design. The colonial windows aren’t wide as pol house windows and they are slightly higher than traditional windows. The journey through the lanes of old Ahmedabad absolutely gives a royal retreat to the eyes. The Havelis and pols will take you to the bygone golden era and leave you awestruck at the artistry of artisans.





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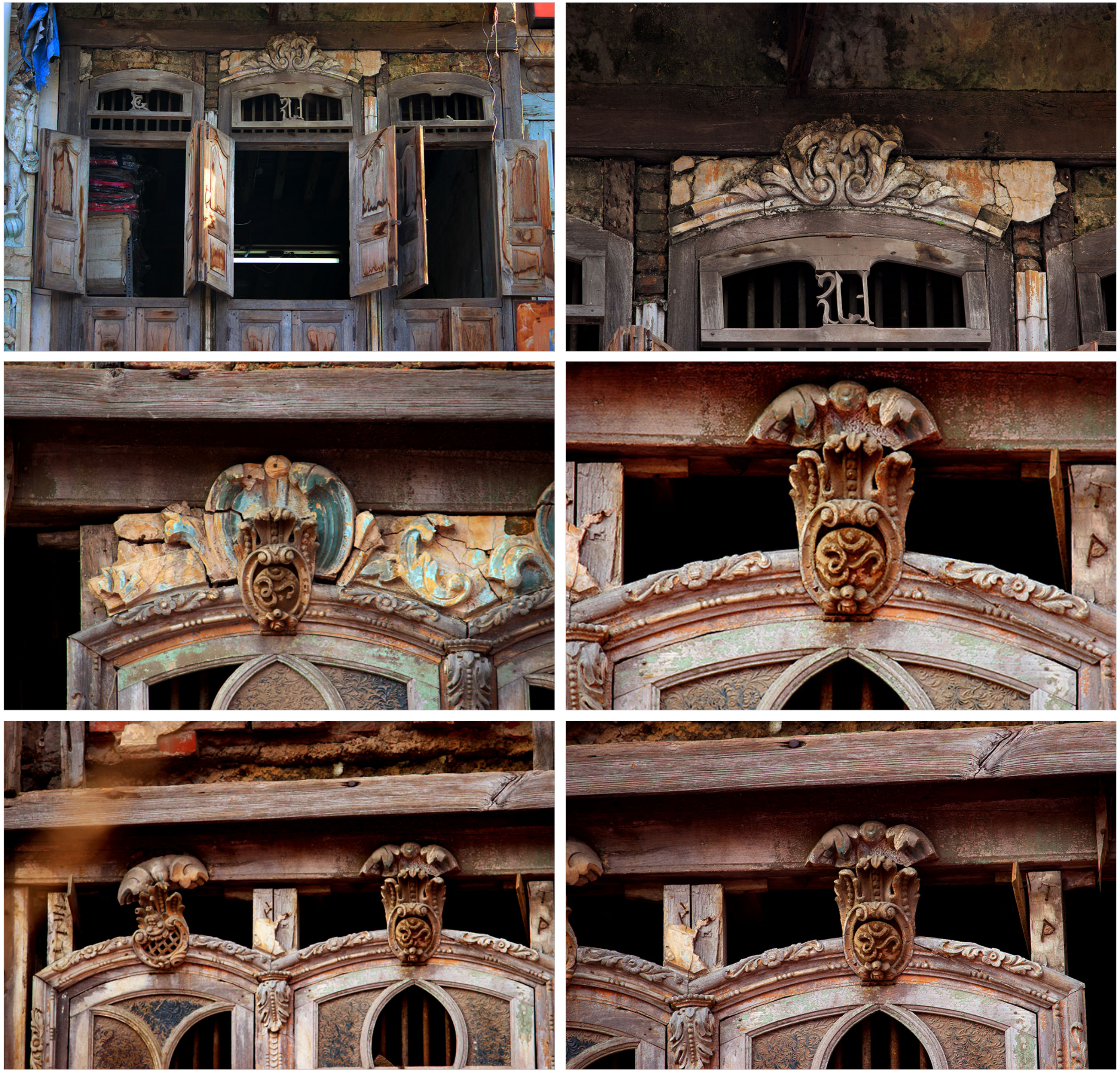

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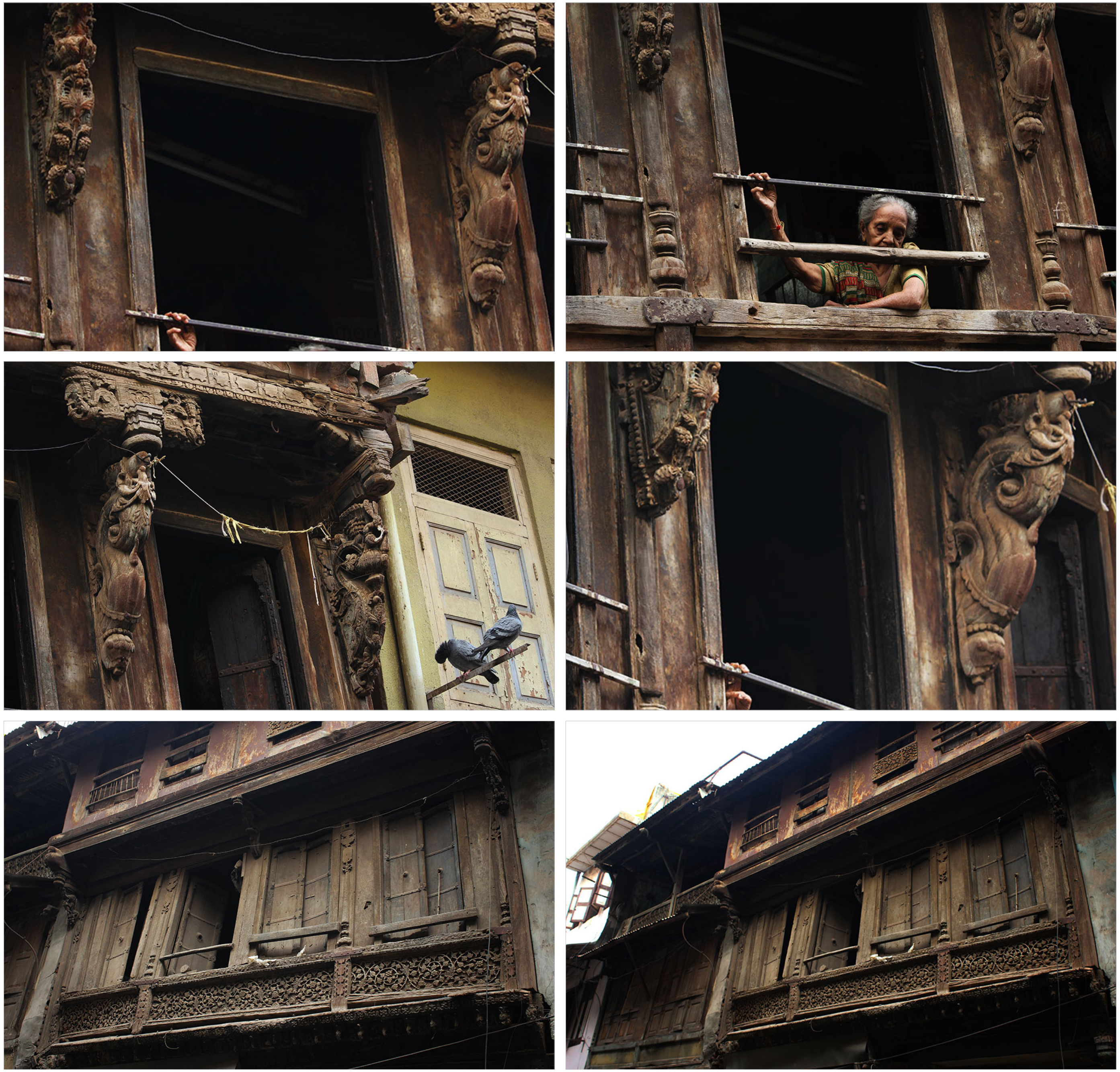

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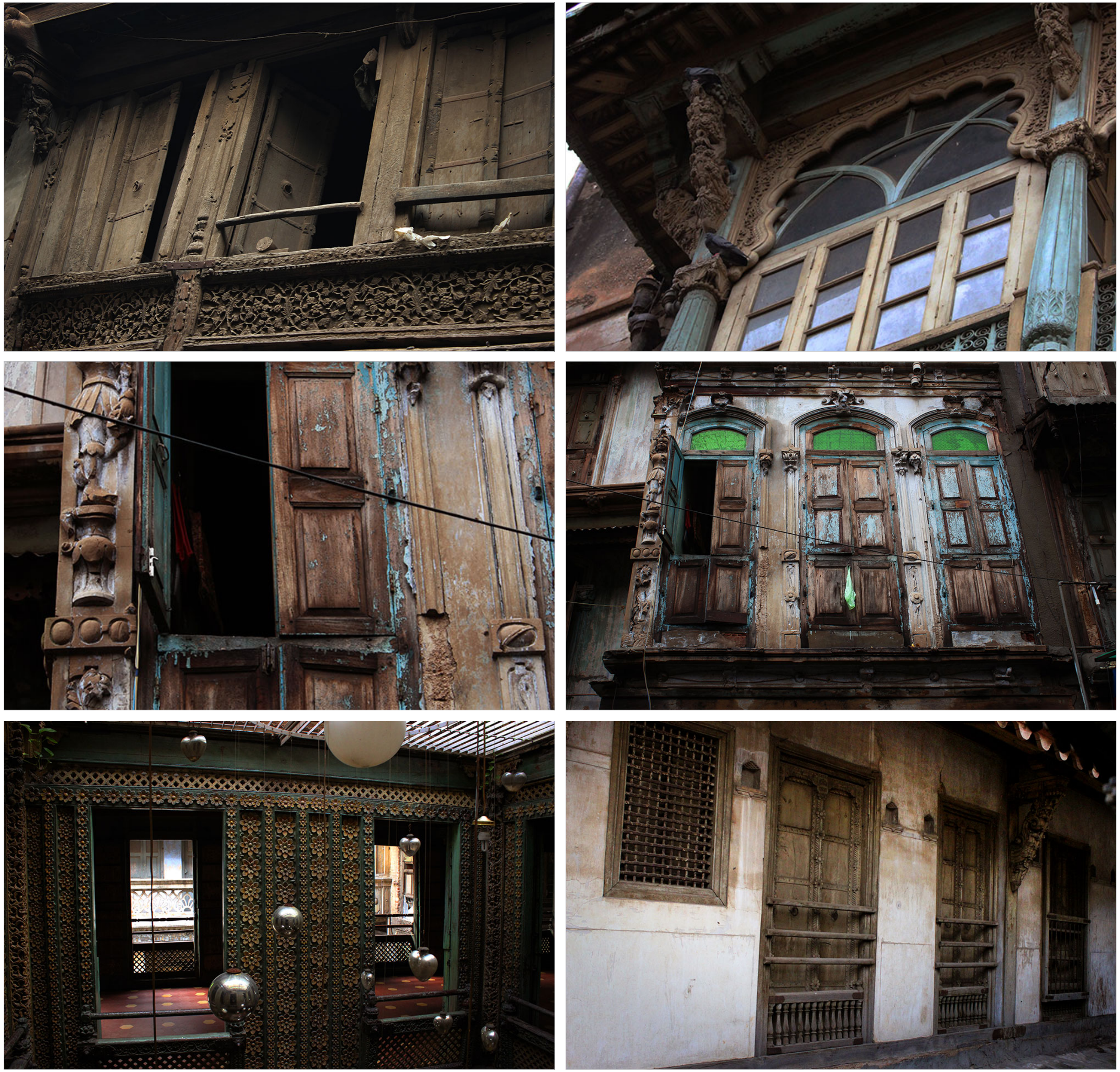

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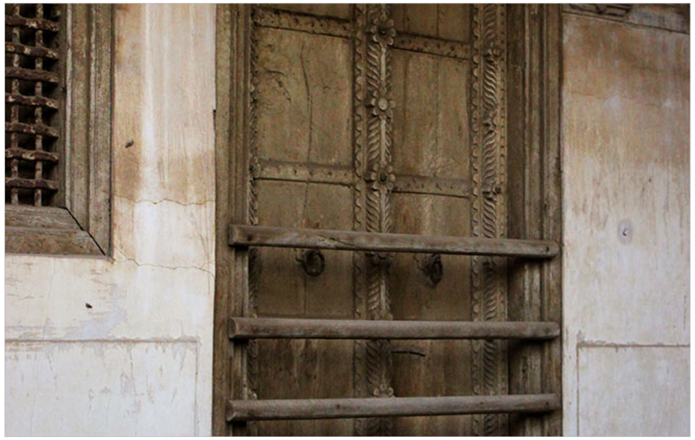

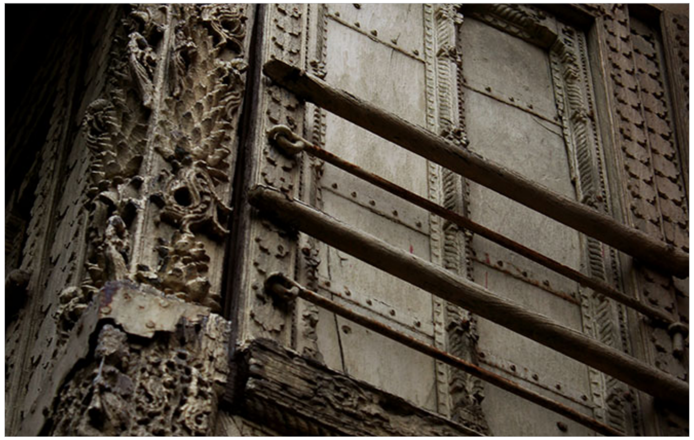

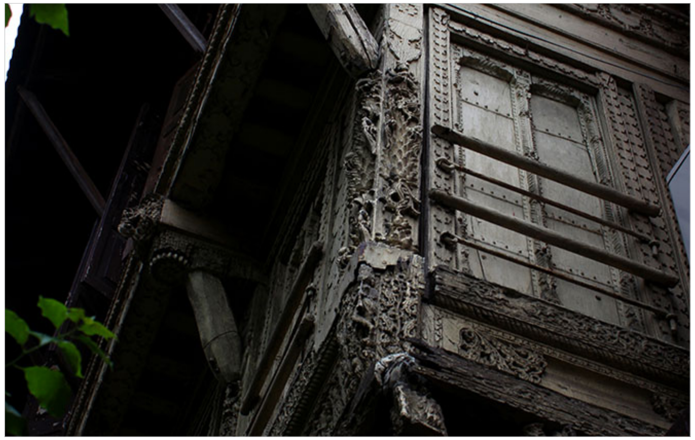

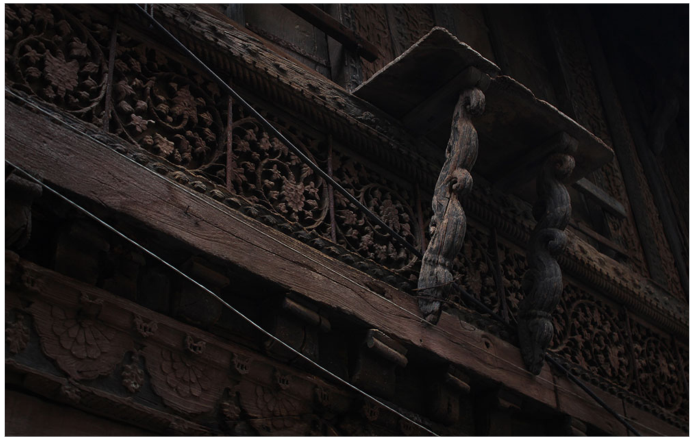

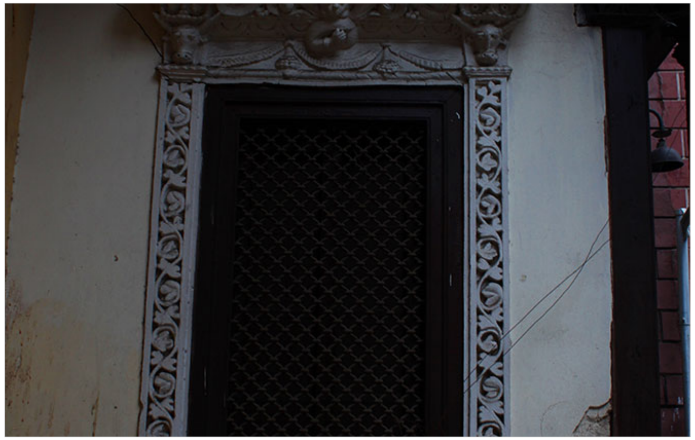

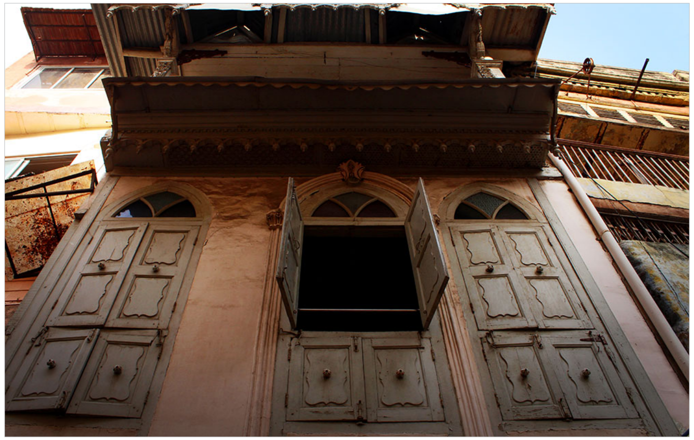

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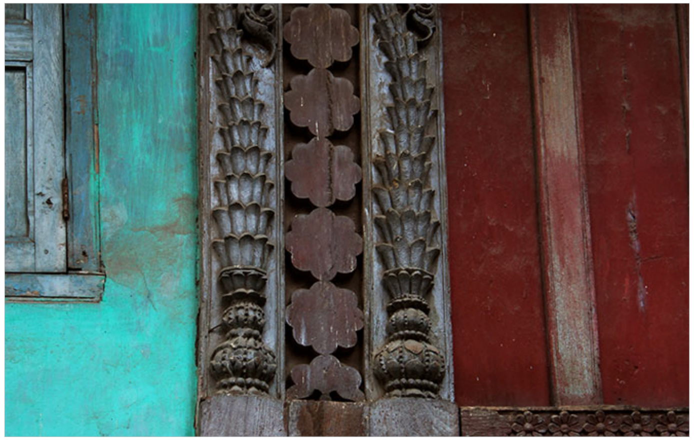

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Contact Details

This documentation was done by Sunny Kolekar at IDC, IIT Bombay.

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